# The Great Famine & Genocide in Iran

Second Edition

1917–1919

Mohammad Gholi Majd

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## *Chapter One*

# Introduction

The Great Famine of 1917-1919 was unquestionably the greatest calamity in the history of Iran, far surpassing anything that had happened before. It is shown in this study that 8-10 million Iranians, 40-50% of the population, was wiped out because of starvation and the associated diseases that accompany malnutrition. In comparison, the total number of troops from all the belligerent countries killed in battle in World War I was 8.5 million. That is Iranian losses were at least as great as the total fatalities suffered by *all* the belligerents: more people died in Iran than in all the battlefields of World War I. Unquestionably, "neutral" Iran was the greatest victim of World War I. Yet the Great Famine in Iran, one of the greatest famines of modern times, and definitely one of the largest genocide of the twentieth century has remained unknown and unexplored. The history of Iran in World War I and after cannot be understood without an understanding of what transpired in the country during 1917-1919. Other south Asian countries have also suffered devastating war time famines in the twentieth century, possibly the best known being the 1943 famine in Bengal in which 3-5 million died, described in detail in a recent book.[1] A most remarkable fact about the Iranian famine of 1917-1919 is its relative magnitude: while the 1943 Indian famine had claimed 3-5 million out of a population of some 300 million, the Iranian famine in World War I had taken 8-10 million out of a population of 18-20 million.

Discussing the devastation of Iran, the Soviet historian Lev Miroshnikov wrote: "The First World War brought to the peoples of Iran incalculable misfortunes and privations. Vast regions were devastated by war, many tens of thousands of Iranians starved or died after illness, suffered or lost their lives as a result of military operations. Looking back it is even now difficult to say how Iran might have suffered less… It was impossible to defend national sovereignty from encroachments by the Great

Powers, each of whom considered Iran a prize in the struggle for new colonies and spheres of influence."[2] In a report submitted by the Iranian Delegation to the General Assembly of the League of Nations, dated December 6, 1920, the following is stated: "At the beginning of the war of 1914-1918, the Persian Government, anxious to continue its historic traditions, solemnly declared its neutrality… Despite her neutrality, Persia has been a battlefield during the world cataclysm. Her richest provinces in the north and north-east have been ravaged, divided and disorganized by the Turco-Russian forces. Many are the ruins which cover Persian territory from Makou (a town lying in the extreme north of Persian Province Azerbaidjan), to the very south. Towns and villages have been pillaged and burned, and hundreds of thousands of men were compelled to say a lasting farewell to their beloved homes and to find death from hunger and cold far from their native provinces. At Teheran, a city of about 500,000 inhabitants, 90,000 persons died of famine for want of bread; since the big lines of communication were cut by the invaders. All the Governments which followed each other during the war were faced with insurmountable difficulties which arose from the violation of Persian neutrality. The food-supplying provinces of Persia—such as Mazenderan, Gailan, Azerbaidjan, Hamadan and Kirmanshahan—which were rich in corn, rice and other cereals, were unable to produce anything, owing to the lack of labour and the want of security: famine, that pitiless scourge, ruled over the greater part of the country and spread ruin and death among its people… It is with deep emotion that we mention the high figure of our loss in man-power—a cruel loss of 300,000 men, massacred by the sword of the invader."[3] As documented in this study, Tehran's population fell from 500,000 to 200,000 and its loss to famine and disease was at least three times as great as that stated in the above report.

In his 1934 biography of the former British Foreign Secretary, the late Lord George N. Curzon, Harold Nicolson wrote: "Persia, during the war, had been exposed to violations and sufferings not endured by any other neutral country."[4] The subject was all but ignored and practically forgotten until August 1941, when at the time of the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran one finds a few brief mentions in the American diplomatic records. For instance, in a memorandum of August 13, 1941, addressed to the Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department, Wallace Smith Murray, wrote: "During the

late World War, despite Iran's declared neutrality, she was invaded by both the Great Powers, which resulted in untold misery to the Persian people. It is estimated that during the famine of 1917-1918, caused by the chaotic conditions of the country, approximately one-third of the population perished."[5] Given that the post-famine population of Iran in 1919 was 10 million, Murray implies that 5 million had perished. It is shown in this study that the reality was far worse. In a note to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, dated August 21, 1941, and containing Iran's reply to the Anglo-Russian ultimatum of August 16, 1941, the Iranian Minister to Washington, Mohammad Schayesteh, wrote: "The Iranians remember with sorrow the great misfortunes of the last war, the unbelievable number of the population which died as a result of famine and epidemics caused by foreign interference in Iran."[6]

Thereafter, the subject was again relegated to oblivion.

## IRAN IN WORLD WAR I

The conquest by Great Britain of the vast area stretching from India to Egypt in World War I is one of the great colonial conquests of history about which little has been written and even less is known. Despite the fact that it took four years of often brutal warfare and hundreds of thousands of combat casualties (Turks, Arabs, Indians fighting for the British, and Iranians), not to mention the millions who died of famine and disease, the subject has attracted practically no interest by academic historians in the West. As history is written by the victors, it is easy to misrepresent the past. For almost 100 years the "history" of World War I in the Near East has been popularly portrayed as the "liberation" of the Arabs from the Turks by such romantic fictional characters as "Lawrence of Arabia," while the fate of the "peripheral" countries such as Iran was not even mentioned. For nearly a century the history of the Near East, including that of Iran, in World War I had remained shrouded in mystery and misinformation. Yet, it was within the context of the vast colonial conquest of World War I that Iran suffered its greatest calamity in its recorded history. While a detailed history of Iran in World War I is beyond the scope of this study, chapter two gives an account of the military campaigns in Iran during 1914-1918. Not surprisingly, military operations in Iran by Great Britain, Russia and Turkey were closely tied to the campaigns in Mesopotamia, Palestine and the

Caucasus, and military operations in Iran must be viewed within the context of the wider war in the Near East.

Iran was invaded and occupied by Great Britain and Russia in both World War I and World War II. In both wars, Russia invaded northern Iran on both sides of the Caspian as well as along the Caspian Sea. Similarly, in both wars, Great Britain invaded western and southern Iran from Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Great Britain also invaded eastern Iran from India in World War I. Similarly, Iraq was also invaded from the south and occupied by Great Britain in both wars. Because of her control of India, Britain was able to rapidly move large forces from India to the Near East in both wars. But the nature of the invasion and occupation of Iran and Iraq in the two wars was very different. It took Great Britain four years of often brutal warfare during 1914-1918 to conquer Iraq from the Ottomans and to subdue the country. In contrast, it took Great Britain just one month of sustained bombing in May 1941 to overthrow a hostile Iraqi government and to subdue the country. Similarly, the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran on August 25, 1941, was a blitzkrieg in which the two allies unleashed overwhelming force against Iran and in just four days occupied the country.[7] There was very little actual combat on Iranian soil, and the "war" in Iran was over by August 28, 1941, when the Iranian government announced a unilateral "cessation of resistance," and three days later the victorious Russian and British armies met and celebrated in Qazvin. In contrast, Iran was a battle ground in World War I where for four years practically every corner of the land was at some point the scene of hostilities between the invading armies or between Iranians and the invaders. Large areas of western and southern Iran were devastated by the fighting.

In analyzing the history of Iran in World War I, it is useful to identify three distinct phases of the war in Iran. The first phase was from November 1914 to March 1917. Iran was invaded and occupied by its three neighbors; Great Britain and Russia concluded a new secret agreement for dividing Iran and soundly defeated all attempts to dislodge them. By March 1917, when the British captured Baghdad and the Russians drove the Turks out of western Iran, Russia and Britain were the unquestioned masters of their respective halves of Iran, and, except for a brief period during May to September 1918, war in the form of battles between belligerents on Iranian territory came to an end. Thereafter, military operations by Great Britain

consisted almost entirely of inflicting “punishment” and “restoring law and order” on the tribes that resisted British occupation.

Phase two was from April 1917 to January 1918. In this period, the United States formally entered the war on the side of the Allies, and the political and military consequences of the Russian revolution began to unfold. But Iranian rejoicing at the downfall of Tsarist Russia was very much tempered by the onset of famine in the country. The Russian revolution and the entry of America into the war provided Great Britain a historical opportunity to conquer all of the Middle East. It soon became evident, much to Britain’s relief, that Russia was incapable of sustaining an effective military presence in the northern half of Iran let alone advance into Iraq. With Russia incapacitated, the British had turned their attention to the conquest of Palestine and to the subjugation of the tribes of southern Iran. Meanwhile, with the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, Russia had begun withdrawing its armies from Iran.

The third phase of the war was from January to November 1918. Following the capture of Jerusalem in December 1917, the British had again looked to Iran, and quickly moved to occupy the northern half of Iran which had been completely evacuated by Russia by March 1918. Also, beginning in May 1918, the British had set about subduing the remaining tribes of south Iran. The bitter fight with the tribes had lasted until October 1918, much longer than expected. In the summer of 1918, the Turks had occupied Azerbaijan, thus threatening the British lines of communication to the Caspian Sea. Following their defeats in Palestine in September 1918, and in Iraq in October 1918, the Turks withdrew from Iran, and Turkish forces had evacuated Iranian soil by the end of October 1918. Thus by the advent of the armistice on November 11, 1918, the vast area stretching from Egypt to India, including all of Iran, Iraq, Palestine, and Arabia was under British occupation. Having been freed from the claws of the Russian bear, Iran was swallowed by the British lion. Moreover, as described in this study, from the spring of 1917, or the onset of phase two of the war, Iran had plunged into famine.

More than any other event, World War I has shaped the history of the modern Near East. In the immediate post-war period, Great Britain had tried to create a legal framework for the formal control of Iran through the ill-fated and unpopular Anglo-Persian Convention of August 9, 1919. Complicating matters, Britain also faced rivalry with the United States over

the Near East oil. Immediately after the end of World War I, American oil companies had tried to enter the lucrative oilfields of the Near East. Britain's initial attempts to exclude American oil interests from both Iran and Iraq had elicited considerable American anger and much diplomatic exchange between the two governments, including numerous formal notes. In addition, the American government had encouraged the Iranians to resist British attempts to impose the unpopular convention. Eventually, after much negotiation, an Anglo-American "oil entente" was arrived at in the fall of 1920, by which American oil interests were given access to the oilfields of Iraq. In exchange, America implicitly consented to a British monopoly of Iranian oil and political control of Iran.[8] The stage was thus set for the coup d'état of February 21, 1921, that brought the future Reza Shah Pahlavi to power, and in December 1925, he ascended the throne with the help of the British.[9] In retrospect, it is evident that a principal reason that the British opted to impose a military dictatorship in Iran following World War I was to conceal the Great Famine of 1917-1919 for as long as possible. And it succeeded admirably: for nearly 60 years Iran became a military dictatorship which in turn made it possible to suppress information on and to cover-up the country's greatest calamity for over 80 years. It is remarkable that the State Department archives pertaining to Iran in World War I, including the documents on the Great Famine, were declassified in the late 1950s, and yet remained unnoticed for nearly fifty years until they were brought to light by the author.

## THE GREAT FAMINE OF 1917-1919

This book is an expanded and revised edition of my original book on the Great Famine of 1917-1919 which was published in 2003.[10] My initial interest in the subject was sparked by a 1925 report on the alimentation situation in Iran by Wallace Smith Murray, the American chargé d'affaires in Tehran. In discussing the food situation, Murray mentions the famine of 1917-1918, and states that one-third of the population of Iran had been "carried off" by starvation and disease. I could not believe my eyes. I had seen odd references to this famine in earlier reports, and was vaguely aware that this was a serious famine. But casualties of this magnitude, implying millions had perished, was altogether different. The matter led me to make a careful search of the records of the Department of State for Iran during

1914-1919. It turned out to be a revelation. The records are immensely rich and previously unused. I soon discovered that Murray's statement that one-third of the population of Iran had been "carried off" was an understatement. The reality was far worse. The statistics are simply mind-boggling and are reported and discussed in chapter four. As reported in the American diplomatic archives, the population of Iran in 1900 was 12 million and had increased to 15 million in 1910. By natural progression it should have been 18-20 million in 1920. The actual population in 1920 is reported at 10 million, showing that 8-10 million Iranians had been lost to famine and disease—a famine of cataclysmic proportions. Another indication of the famine's toll is the decline in the population of Tehran. In 1910, on the basis of the daily bread consumption in the city, the population of Tehran was reported to be 400,000 (chapter four). By the onset of the famine in 1917, it had surpassed 500,000. By 1920, Tehran's population had fallen to under 200,000. Not until 1939 did Tehran recover its 1917 population, and not until the 1950s did Iran's population recover to its pre-World War I level. Given that the famine was initially caused by war destruction and the occupation of the country by its neighbors, and then greatly worsened and lengthened by the policies of Great Britain, Iranian losses to famine were casualties of the Great War. As noted, at least as many people died of famine and disease in neutral Iran than the combined battlefield fatalities of *all* the belligerents of the Great War. And yet Iran could not even get admission to the peace conference at Versailles nor get a hearing. These findings provide an entirely different perspective on the modern history of Iran and World War I. Another remarkable finding of chapter four is that the population of Iran in 1920 was the same as the population of the country in 1850. That is, over a seventy-year span when world population almost doubled, increasing from 1.1 billion to 1.9 billion, Iran's population was unchanged. Moreover, in the fifty-year span of 1870 to 1920, Iran suffered two devastating famines: that of 1870-71 and 1917-19. In the famine of 1870-71, according to economic historians, some 1.5 to 2 million Iranians had perished, and, as shown in this study, 8-10 million Iranians were lost during 1917-19. In short, seventy years of population growth had been wiped out by famine. Here possibly lies the root of Iran's underdevelopment.

As noted, chapter two provides an outline of the main military and political events in Iran during 1914-1918. Chapter three provides a

documentary account of the famine. The sources include: American diplomatic dispatches from Tehran and Tabriz, reports by American missionaries from different cities of Iran, Iranian newspaper accounts on the extent of the famine, and the diaries and memoirs of several notable Iranians. They provide a rich source of documentation. In addition, use is made of the memoirs of British military officers who served in Iran: Major-General L.C. Dunsterville, commanding officer of the British "Dunster-force" in Iran in 1918; Major-General W.E.R. Dickson, Inspector-General of the East Persia Cordon during 1918-1919; and Major M.H. Donohoe, a well-known war correspondent who served as a military intelligence and political officer in western Iran in 1918.[11] These eye-witness accounts written immediately after the war are especially valuable and informative not only on the magnitude of the starvation and death, but also shed a great deal of light on the policies of Great Britain. Chapter four discusses demographic developments in Iran especially during 1900-1920. It debunks some of the erroneous and misleading demographic claims that appeared in British publications during the 1960s and 1970s, and also shows that Murray's implicit estimate that 5 million Iranians died in the famine greatly understates the actual losses which were 8-10 million. Having described and documented the famine and its losses, the following chapters then describe such actions and policies of the main belligerents that greatly lengthened and deepened the famine. As shown in this study, British trade and financial policies had been the major cause of deepening and lengthening the famine, resulting in the death of millions of Iranians.

## CAUSES OF THE FAMINE

Chapters 5-7 examine some of the main causes of the famine. Iran was faced with food shortages and high prices from the second half of 1916, and by the spring of 1917, shortages had turned into famine. By then the Turks were gone, and by the fall of 1917, the Russians were on the way out, and they were gone by March 1918. Thereafter only the British remained. This calamity took place when practically all of Iran and the countries to its east and west, not to mention the Persian Gulf, were under British military occupation and control. It is most revealing that from the beginning the British had conducted a skillful propaganda campaign to blame the Russians, the Turks, and the Iranians for this tragedy.

Chapter five examines British grain purchases in Iran during the famine. The documentary evidence presented shows that the large-scale purchase of grain to feed the British armies in Iran, Mesopotamia, and southern Russia greatly aggravated the famine in Iran. In a moment of candor, General Dunsterville himself acknowledges and laments the fact that British grain purchases contributed to the shortage and higher prices and thus resulted in the death of many more Persians. Equally revealing is the report by Major Donohoe on the evacuation of the town of Maragheh in Azerbaijan by the British army in September 1918 in the face of a Turkish offensive. Having first purchased a great deal of foodstuffs, the British had destroyed the town's stocks of grain right in the middle of a raging famine in order to prevent the grain from falling into the hands of the Turks. It is surprising that General Dunsterville's statement and Major Donohoe's report had escaped British censorship. A possible explanation is that since the two books were published immediately after the war (Donohoe in 1919, and Dunsterville in 1920) the matter had escaped the attention of the British censors. It is very revealing that while the famine is freely discussed in Donohoe and Dunsterville, not a single mention of it is made in General Dickson's 1924 book. Evidently, by then British censorship had become more vigilant. Yet from Dickson's book we have a detailed account of the large-scale grain purchases by the British army in Khorassan for the purpose of feeding the British army in southern Russia under General Malleson. From the American missionaries in Mashhad and from newspapers we have documentary evidence of the appalling famine in Mashhad at the very time that the British were purchasing large quantities of grain, as reported by Dickson himself. British grain purchases in Shiraz is referred to by Sir Percy Sykes.[12]

Most revealing perhaps is the case study of the famine in Rasht, Gilan. From the detailed reports of the American missionaries in Rasht, we know that initially the city had been spared the terrible famine that had prevailed elsewhere in Iran. In Rasht, it was mostly the refugees from other regions who had faced hunger and disease, but they had been mostly taken care of and fed. The city was occupied by the British army in June 1918, but effective control had not been achieved until the defeat of the Jangalis in late July 1918. Shortly after the British occupation of Gilan, the province had plunged into famine. The main reason is to be found in General Dunsterville's own book. Soon after the occupation of Gilan, the British had

purchased rice and other foods (including watermelons, honey, and even caviar) for the purpose of feeding the British army of occupation in Baku as well as the starving population of Baku. Thus the population of Gilan had been starved in order to feed the population of Baku. What is remarkable about General Dunsterville's account is that while he blithely describes the food-laden ships destined for Baku from the Iranian port of Enzeli, he is completely uncaring and oblivious of the fact that he was sentencing many innocent Iranians to death by starvation. To Dunsterville, it was all part of the "Adventures of the Dunsterforce." The response of the Iranian government was to issue a decree that had supposedly "prohibited" food exports from the Caspian coast of Iran. For the Iranians, British food purchase and export was nothing short of genocide. Unquestionably the most important document concerning the purchase of grain by the British is the report by Addison E. Southard, American consul on special assignment in Iran. In this report, Southard reveals that the British purchase of foodstuff in western Iran had been handled by the "Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources," with headquarters in Baghdad and whose staff consisted of no less than two thousand officers. In a conversation with General Dickson, the head of the Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources who was visiting Iran, Southard had learned that British purchases of grain had exceeded 500,000 tons. No wonder Iran had experienced a famine. General Dickson had further boasted to Southard about the amount of shipping space saved by the "local" purchases. If the material had not been acquired locally, Dickson declares, it would have had to be imported from India, thereby using up shipping space. General Dickson states that the local purchases had freed up shipping space for use on the Atlantic. Clearly, the British could have shipped grain from India to feed the starving in Iran, but to free shipping space on the Atlantic, millions of Iranians had been sacrificed. While the Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources had handled food purchases in western and northern parts of Iran, from General W.E.R. Dickson we have a detailed account of British food purchases in eastern Iran.

It should be noted again that at the onset of the famine, Iran's neighbors to the east and west, India and Mesopotamia, as well as the Persian Gulf, were under British military occupation and control. Moreover, in addition to purchasing large quantities of food in Iran, the British had prevented the importation of food into Iran from India and Mesopotamia.

As noted by Southard, there was ample grain in both India and Mesopotamia—but Iran, located in the middle, had starved. In addition, the British had prevented the importation of food from the United States. As revealed in the American diplomatic dispatches, it is very remarkable that at a time when Iran was about to plunge into a vicious famine that killed millions, the British had prevented the importation of food from the United States. Moreover, one cannot refrain from pointing out that while the United States had rushed food to Belgium in World War I, saving some 7.5 million Belgians from starvation, it had shown no similar desire to undertake famine relief in Iran.[13] Given the current sanctions on Iran that severely restrict her ability to export its oil and import such vital necessities as food and medicine, the prevention and constriction of Iran's foreign trade in World War I is more than of historical interest. It appears that the current sanctions are simply a continuation of policies that were first pursued with great effect nearly a century ago.

## THE FINANCIAL STRANGULATION

Chapter six examines the financial strangulation of Iran by the British and the Russian governments. It should be pointed out that in view of the current sanctions on Iran over its disputed nuclear program, the material in chapter six is of special interest and significance. Depriving Iran of its financial resources was consistent with the British policy of depriving Iran of its food supply. Traditionally, revenue from the maritime southern and northern customs had been the main source of income to the Iranian government. Because of the indebtedness of the Iranian government to Great Britain and Russia, the southern and northern customs revenues were collected by the British and the Russian governments respectively. From these revenues were deducted the interest and amortization on the loans and the balance was paid to the Iranian government. The advent of the war drastically reduced foreign commerce and hence customs revenues and created a financial crisis for the Iranian government. In response, a "moratorium agreement" was reached between the Iranian government and the governments of Russia and Great Britain. Under the moratorium agreement, for the duration of the war the servicing of the loans was deferred and the entire revenues were to be given to the Iranian government. With commerce dwindling because of the war, the moratorium

payments proved insufficient. As part of an agreement with the Iranian government in July 1916, the Russian and British governments had agreed to pay Iran a monthly sum of 200,000 tomans. At the time this amounted to £30,000, the exchange rate being 65 krans (6.5 tomans) to the pound. For several months initially, this sum was withheld, and after the Russian Revolution, the Russians stopped payment of their half. Thereafter, the British paid on a very irregular basis. Subsequently, difficulties arose over the exchange rate.

As the result of large purchases of foodstuffs by the British, there was a huge appreciation of the Iranian currency during World War I. The appreciation of the kran was also associated with what can only be termed as hyper inflation. This highly unusual phenomenon was clearly a result of large purchases and expenditures by the British army in Iran. However, the British continued to collect the much diminished customs revenues in the greatly appreciated krans, but paid the Iranian government the fixed £30,000 in the greatly depreciated pounds (18 krans instead of the initial 65 krans per pound sterling). The Iranian government's demand that it be paid in krans fell on deaf ears. Given the huge depreciation of the sterling, the Iranian government was able to get less than a third of the number of krans than previously. Moreover, with the huge increase in the price level, the real purchasing power of the monthly payments had declined to practically nothing. Thus customs revenues for all practical purposes had ceased.

The withholding of Iran's oil revenues completed the financial strangulation of the country. Unquestionably, the most important financial measure against Iran was to deprive it of its oil revenues. At a time when millions of Iranians starved, the British government and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (they were one and the same) had withheld Iran's oil revenues on some flimsy pretext. The amount of oil revenues due to Iran during 1914-1919 was £8 million. This was $40 million—a vast sum by the standards of the time—and nearly four times the total annual budget of the Iranian government. Had this money been paid, many would have been spared death by starvation and disease.

In 1911, Iran had begun producing crude oil, and with the construction of the oil refinery in Abadan in 1912, Iran very quickly became a major producer and exporter of petroleum. The oil concession was held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, two-thirds of whose stock was acquired by the British government in 1914. With the war, oil production increased greatly

and with it the profits of the oil company. Had the Anglo-Persian Oil Company paid Iran's royalties and income in good faith (about 25% of the company's earnings under the D'Arcy Concession), the oil revenues would have many times compensated for the decline in customs revenues. In fact, with the vast profits made by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Iran's annual income would have amounted to £2 million ($10 million), a huge sum by the standards of the time. Soon after the outbreak of the war in 1914, the British had stopped payments of royalties to Iran and had even demanded $2 million in "compensation" for the damages inflicted on the pipeline by some hostile tribesmen in February 1915. Although the Iranian government was not responsible for actions beyond its control, and the pipeline had been restored by June 1915, the British had continued to withhold payment of royalties to the Iranian government. Payments did not resume until after the 1921 coup d'état that brought Reza Pahlavi to power. Iran was deprived of at least £8 million, a sum that would have saved many lives during the famine.[14] It is very noteworthy that the "oil weapon," that is depriving Iran of its oil revenues, was first used against the country in World War I. It was again used during the 1951-53 Iranian oil nationalization dispute when the British, with American acquiescence, organized a boycott of Iranian oil, and severely weakened the government of Mohammad Mossadegh prior to the Anglo-American coup d'état that deposed Mossadegh and restored the departed Pahlavi Shah to the throne. The current sanctions are also intended to deprive the Iranian government of oil revenues and force it to surrender its nuclear program. Deprived of most of its oil income, the Iranian currency has plunged 80% in a matter of months, and already shortage of essential goods such food and medicine are widely reported. There can be no doubt that many innocent Iranians, including the most vulnerable, will fall victim to hunger and disease.

The combination of depriving Iran of its oil revenues and the exchange rate chicanery completed the financial strangulation of Iran, with the result that the government was completely starved of funds during the war and the famine and was completely unable to provide any meaningful famine relief to the victims. Having completely deprived Iran of its financial resources, the British government had complained loudly about the inability of the Iranian government to come to the aid of the famine sufferers. It should be stressed again that depriving Iran of its financial resources was consistent with the British policy of depriving Iran of its food supply. That famine and

genocide had been used by the British as a deliberate act of war in their conquest of Iran there can be no doubt.

Chapter seven looks at the looting and pillage by the Russian soldiers during their withdrawal from Iran during the summer and fall of 1917. The Iranian newspapers, rightly, made much of the Russian depredations in this period. But it should be pointed out that the Russian transgressions took place when famine already stalked the land. The chapter also describes early British attempts to blame the famine on the Russians and the Turks, but most of all, on the Iranians themselves, that is on hoarding and profiteering by landowners and grain merchants, and corruption of high officials.

With the advent of the peace conference at Versailles in 1919, Iran had hoped to participate therein and to obtain reparation for the devastation of the country and the war-induced famine. But the British, with the acquiescence of the American and French governments, were not about to give Iran a hearing at the peace conference. In retrospect, it is clear that the refusal was part of the early measures designed to conceal and cover up the Iranian holocaust. Unable to get admission to the peace conference let alone get a hearing, in March 1919, the Iranian delegation in Paris had put out a document that supposedly laid out Iran's grievances and demands for reparation. Chapter eight describes Iran's failure to get admission to the Versailles conference, and comments on the above document. The military and political history of Iran in World War I is completely misrepresented. In addition to ridiculous territorial claims, it is full of inaccurate, misleading and outright mendacious statements.[15] As described in chapter eight, Iran's economic grievances and the causes of the famine are completely misrepresented. By mixing Iran's real grievances with a heavy dose of falsehood, it trivializes the famine, obscures its causes, and thus weakens Iran's case. The cover-up of Iran's greatest calamity had begun very early on.

## NOTES

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## *Chapter Two*

# Iran in World War I[1]

In response to the rising power of Germany prior to World War I, Great Britain and Russia, Iran's southern and northern rival imperial powers competing for the control of the country, had decided to settle many of their differences, and in particular, end their rivalry in Iran. By the Anglo-Russian Agreement of August 13, 1907, Iran was effectively partitioned into two "spheres of influence," and a "neutral zone." The northern part of the country was included in the Russian sphere, and the southeastern part was in the British sphere, while the remainder was declared a "neutral" zone. The ink on the agreement was barely dry when it was rendered obsolete by the discovery of oil by British interests in 1908 in the southwestern "neutral" part of Iran. There can be no doubt that the August 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement was also a response to the advent of the 1906 Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the granting of a Constitution by the dying Mozafar-ed-Din Shah Qajar in January 1907. In the new constitution, the Shah was but a ceremonial figurehead while power rested with an elected parliament. The two powers rightly saw the emerging system of constitutional monarchy and elected parliament as a menace to their control of the country and set about undermining it. In this cynical policy, the two imperial powers found an unwitting collaborator in the person of Mohammad Ali Shah Qajar, the son and successor of Mozafared-Din Shah. The advent of civil war in 1908 provided the two powers the opportunity and pretext to actively interfere in Iranian affairs, and Russia occupied Tabriz, Iran's second largest city. Despite unfavorable odds, the revolutionaries triumphed and occupied Tehran in July 1909, replaced Mohammad Ali Shah by his 12-year-old son, Ahmad Shah, and reconvened parliament.

Having consolidated its position, the new constitutional regime had looked to America as a countervailing force to Russia and Great Britain.

The appointment of W. Morgan Shuster of New York as Treasurer General of Persia and his arrival in Tehran in May 1911 indicated Iran's earnest desire to set its house in order and to seek American assistance. Shuster had energetically set about reforming Iran's finances, and in a very short time had gained the confidence of the Iranians. Greatly alarmed at his success and at the prospect of serious American inroads into Iran, Russia and Great Britain had set about undermining Shuster, and seizing on some flimsy pretext, in December 1911, the Russians had presented an ultimatum to the Iranian government demanding an immediate dismissal of Shuster and the dissolution of parliament. While not a party to the ultimatum, the British government had actively supported the Russian demands. At the same time, the Russians had moved additional troops into Azerbaijan, while the British had occupied the southern port of Bushire. The Iranians were thus forced to comply with the Anglo-Russian demands: parliament was forcefully dissolved and Shuster left Iran in January 1912. A most revealing aspect of the Shuster affair was the lack of response by the US government to the ouster of Shuster who had been recommended for the Persian post by the President of the United States. Clearly, the US government was anxious to avoid antagonizing Great Britain and Russia and desired no involvement in Iranian affairs.

For the next two years in the absence of parliament, Iran was governed by a regent and a cabinet acting on behalf of the boy-king, Ahmad Shah. Although the Russians continued to maintain 14,500 troops in Azerbaijan, and the British continued to maintain a "garrison" of Indian troops in Bushire, the year 1914 began with favorable domestic developments. First, following intensive popular demand, beginning in February 1914, parliamentary elections to the third Majlis were begun in Tehran and were continued in the provinces, and the elections were completed in April 1914. By May 1914, excitement for a reconvening of parliament was mounting. On July 21, 1914, the young Ahmad Shah Qajar, having reached the legal age of maturity, was formally crowned Shah of Iran. On July 28, 1914, one week after the coronation of Ahmad Shah, World War I broke out in Europe with Austria's declaration of war on Serbia. A series of mobilizations and declarations of war by the other European powers followed quickly. Shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe, Iran had a new cabinet under Mostofi-ol-Mamalek, but parliament was not reconvened until December 5, 1914. By then, World War I had spread to the Near East, and despite its declared

neutrality, Iran had already become a victim of aggression by all three of its neighbors.

## THE INITIAL VIOLATION OF IRAN'S NEUTRALITY

Prior to World War I, Germany had established extensive commercial operations in Tabriz, including a large carpet factory named the "Petag," and there was a large German colony in the city. Immediately after the outbreak of the war in Europe, the Russians had attempted to drive out the Germans from Tabriz and to seize German assets in Azerbaijan. On September 8, 1914, the Russian Consul General in Tabriz had "requested" the Iranian governor-general of the province to arrest numerous German and Persian employees of the Petag and to send them to Russia. This was a violation of Iran's neutrality, but with 15,000 Russian troops in the vicinity, the hapless governor had no choice but to accede to the "request." On September 10, 1914, the German consulate in Tabriz was attacked and a Russian had tried to assassinate the German consul in Tabriz. The terrified consul had suffered a complete nervous breakdown. With the deteriorating situation, Turkey had taken advantage of the chaos to occupy the area west of Lake Urumia in Azerbaijan on October 1, 1914, despite the fact that in 1913 an International Frontier Commission had supposedly settled all outstanding frontier issues between the two countries, and the area in question had been confirmed as Iranian territory. On October 7, 1914, the Iranian government had protested the Turkish action. It would appear that, Russian actions in Tabriz notwithstanding, this was the first overt aggression against Iran in World War I.

Meanwhile, in early August 1914, upon the outbreak of war, the British government had instructed the Viceroy in India to prepare to send a naval force to the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab in the Persian Gulf for the purpose of occupying Abadan and its oil refinery and the port of Mohammerah. A long telegraphic exchange between London and India on the desirability of military action in the Persian Gulf and the occupation of the Persian oilfields and of Ottoman Iraq had followed. On September 27, 1914, Turkey had closed the Dardanelles to Allied ships. But already, on September 26, 1914, the British government had instructed the Viceroy to prepare a force to be sent to the Persian Gulf, and a follow-up telegram of October 2, 1914, informed the Viceroy that the British government had

definitely decided on military action in south Iraq and Iran. It is abundantly clear that British plans for military action in the Persian Gulf had long existed, for it took only two weeks to assemble and dispatch the force. On October 16, 1914, an initial all-Indian force of 5,000 men and 1,200 horses had sailed from Bombay and its artillery force sailed from Karachi on the following day. The combined force, accompanied by several battleships, arrived in the vicinity of Bahrain on October 23, 1914. With the force in a position and ready to strike, only an excuse was needed to attack. On October 28, 1914, one day before the *Breslau* and *Goeben* affair in the Black Sea, the British commanding general issued his final plans for landing at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab and the capture of the Ottoman fort of Fao.

On October 29, 1914, the German warships, *Goeben* and *Breslau*, bombarded the Russian Black Sea port of Odessa and sank or damaged several Russian and French vessels. On October 31, 1914, London instructed India to commence hostilities against Turkey and to dispatch immediate reinforcements to support British operations in the Persian Gulf. Holding Turkey responsible for the attack in the Black Sea, the British sank two Turkish ships near Smyrna on November 1, 1914, and the Russian army crossed the Turkish border at Erzurum on the same date. On November 2, 1914, Russia formally declared war on Turkey, while the British followed suit on November 5, 1914. Already on November 1, 1914, Iran had declared its neutrality in a proclamation by Ahmad Shah, while the Foreign Minister, Ala-os-Saltaneh, formally informed the legations of the belligerents of Iran's neutrality in a diplomatic note of November 2, 1914.

Iran's declared neutrality notwithstanding, the Russians had immediately set about arresting and deporting to Russia any German, Turkish and Austrian nationals and any consular officers in Tabriz whom they could lay their hands on, including the Turkish and Austrian consuls, and had seized the consular buildings and had sent the consular archives and records to Russia. The German consul and his wife had escaped arrest and deportation to Russia by seeking asylum in the American consulate.

On November 5, 1914, Great Britain formally declared war on Turkey, and the next day, November 6, 1914, launched an invasion of southern Iraq. The port of Fao and its garrison were quickly taken, and on the same day, November 6, 1914, the British fleet sailed up the Shatt-al-Arab and landed troops on the Iranian island of Abadan and quickly seized the island and its

oil refinery. With Fao and Abadan secured, the British had advanced and had landed at Sanniya on the Iraqi side of the Shatt-al-Arab on November 9-10, 1914, and had awaited reinforcements from India. On November 11, 1914, the Turks had attacked the British at Sanniya, but having received intelligence on the impending attack from the Sheikh of Mohammerah, the Turks were repulsed with heavy losses. Advancing north, the British defeated a Turkish force at the battle of Saihan on November 15, 1914, and then routed a Turkish-Arab force at the battle of Sahil on November 17, 1914. At the battle of Sahil the Turks and Arabs had suffered heavy casualties: 1,500-2,000 out of the Ottoman force of 5,050 were killed or wounded. British casualties were 489, the vast majority Indian. After the battle of Sahil the road to Basra was open. On the evening of November 22, 1914, the British gunboats sailed into Basra which had been abandoned by the Turks the day before. The capture of Basra, Iraq's second largest city, just two weeks after the initial landing, was a major achievement. Having consolidated their position in Basra, the relentless British advance along the Shatt-al-Arab had continued. On December 7, 1914, the Turks suffered another crushing defeat at the battle of Muzaira'a, and retreated to the town of Qurna on the Tigris. On December 9, 1914, the Turkish vali of Basra and 1,000 Turkish officers and men surrendered to the British at Qurna. With the capture of Qurna, the British had completed the occupation of the entire Shatt-al-Arab waterway. Having secured the Shatt-al-Arab in a little over a month, the British had next turned their attention to Khuzestan and the oil region of Iran.

## NEW ANGLO-RUSSIAN DIVISION OF IRAN, MARCH 1915

The rapid success of the British in Iraq was in part due to Turkish inability to send sufficient reinforcements to Iraq because of the war with Russia. In December 1914, the Turks launched an offensive in the Caucasus. The initial success of the offensive prompted the Russians to evacuate Tabriz and to withdraw some of their forces from Azerbaijan. Taking advantage of the Russian retreat, the Turks quickly occupied the Iranian cities of Khoy, Saujbulak and Urumia, and in early January 1915 entered Tabriz and received a warm welcome from the inhabitants who saw the Turks as liberators from the hated Russians. Turkish occupation of Tabriz, however, was brief. In mid-January 1915, the Russians inflicted a heavy defeat on the

Turks at Sarikamish in the Caucasus, and reinvaded Iranian Azerbaijan with the aim of retaking Tabriz. In a battle outside Tabriz on February 1, 1915, the Russians inflicted a decisive defeat on the Turks who immediately withdrew from Tabriz to Maragheh and to the area west of Lake Urumia. The Russians had immediately set about arresting and deporting to Russia any remaining German, Turkish and Austrian nationals whom they could detain and seized all German-owned businesses, including the carpet factory. While the German consul had escaped with the Turkish army, his wife who had been unable to leave, was given asylum in the American consulate, where she remained until March 1915. When the Iranian Foreign Ministry had instructed its representative in Tabriz to protest the Russian actions and the violation of Iran's neutrality, the hapless official was too terrified to deliver the protest to the Russian consul, and had even refrained from informing his own subordinates.

As events in World War II were to demonstrate once more, having occupied southern Iraq, the British could easily launch an invasion of Khuzestan, which they did in early 1915. Having secured the control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, as noted above, they turned their attention to the neighboring oil region of Iran. In early January 1915, as the Turks occupied Tabriz, the British sent a force from Basra to occupy Mohammerah, and in late January 1915, another force from Qurna was dispatched to Ahwaz, while British gunboats sailed up the Karun towards Ahwaz which was occupied on February 1, 1915. Not surprisingly, the British were to take the same route in August 1941 when they occupied Mohammerah and Ahwaz and the oil region in a blitzkrieg offensive. Thus on the day the Russians re-occupied Tabriz, the British occupied Ahwaz, having occupied Mohammerah a few days earlier. By early February 1915, the British had 2,000 troops in Ahwaz. On February 10, 1915, the British received information indicating that a Turkish force, accompanied by a large number of Arab tribesmen had reached 24 miles northwest of Ahwaz and were planning to attack the city. The British had immediately sent reinforcements from Basra and several British gunboats had steamed into Ahwaz. While this force was sufficient to hold Ahwaz, it could not guard some 130 miles of oil pipeline which was severed in late February 1915 in several places by tribesmen resisting the British. Seizing on the incident, the British stopped payment of Iran's oil revenues and demanded compensation. The legal

aspects and the financial consequences of this action will be discussed at length in chapter six.

On February 20, 1915, a party of Germans headed by Wassmuss, the German consul in Bushire, arrived in Khuzestan en route to Fars. The arrival of the Germans and the news that a Turkish force, accompanied by 15,000 tribesmen had gathered on the shores of the Karakheh River, had emboldened numerous tribes to resist the British who had responded by sending additional gunboats up the Karun river. On March 3, 1915, the British attacked a group of tribesmen who had encamped at Ghadir near Ahwaz and inflicted heavy casualties on the tribesmen and prevented them from joining up with the Turks. Immediately after this encounter, the British had set about arresting all German consular officials and nationals in south Iran, prompting numerous protests from the Iranian government and much hostile press.

With the Russian success in Azerbaijan and the British gains in Khuzestan, the stage was set for a new Anglo-Russian division of Iran. As above noted, in the August 13, 1907, Anglo-Russian agreement, Iran was divided into a Russian and a British “sphere of influence” and a “neutral” zone. Shortly after, oil was discovered in the “neutral” zone. On March 4, 1915, the Russian government had informed Great Britain and France that Russia insisted on the inclusion of Constantinople and the Dardanelles in the Russian Empire following the war, and had informed the powers that in return Russia would regard with sympathy the Anglo-French designs on the Near East. After extensive negotiations, London and Paris consented in principle to the Russian demands concerning Constantinople and the Straits. In exchange, on March 12, 1915, the British had formally requested a revision of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of August 1907, and the inclusion of the “neutral” zone of Iran in the British sphere of influence. On March 20, 1915, the Russians had consented to the British demand but had insisted that Isfahan and Yazd be included in the Russian sphere. In short, by the new Anglo-Russian Agreement of March 1915, the entire southern half of Iran was given to the British while the northern half remained in the Russian zone. Russian historians have complained that in exchange for a mere promise of giving Constantinople to Russia, the British gained very tangible benefits in southern Iran, while the Russians gained little. However, as below described, to gain control of southern Iran, the British

had to fight the tribes of the region. Immediately after the agreement, the two powers had set about gaining control of their respective shares of Iran.

On February 20, 1915, the cabinet of Mostofi-ol-Mamalek was reconstituted. On March 13, 1915, the cabinet resigned and a new one under Moshir-ed-Dowleh appointed. It had not taken long for the British and the Russians to conclude that Moshir-ed-Dowleh was no improvement over Mostofi-ol-Mamalek in countering German activity in Iran. Deeply dissatisfied with Moshir-ed-Dowleh, the British and the Russian Ministers in Tehran had tried to force his resignation, prompting a political crisis during April 23-24, 1915. Maintaining the pressure, the two envoys brought about the resignation of Moshir-ed-Dowleh on May 1, 1915, and the appointment of Ein-ed-Dowleh.

## MOUNTING ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST IRAN, SPRING-SUMMER 1915

On April 6, 1915, the German and Austrian Ministers to Iran, accompanied by about 150 Germans, had crossed into Iran from Khaniquin in Iraq. In the next nine months these Germans and their Persian allies were to cause the Russians and the British much trouble and anxiety. In late April 1915, a small Turkish force that had entered Iran withdrew after running into stiff resistance from the Kurdish Sanjabi tribes. In May 1915, another Turkish force officered by Germans and assisted by their Persian supporters, including the Swedish-officered Persian gendarmerie, had gained control of Kermanshah, prompting the departure of the Russian and British consuls from Kermanshah. The Germans had first proceeded to Tehran and subsequent to the Russian advance in the fall of 1915, they went south to Isfahan, Yazd and Kerman. The Turkish success in Kermanshah, however, was insufficient to compensate for a disastrous defeat suffered at Shaiba in south Iraq in April 1915.

In the spring of 1915, following an unsuccessful attempt to gain control of the Suez Canal from the British, the Turks had attempted to retake Basra and drive the British out of southern Iraq. This culminated in the Battle of Shaiba outside Basra during April 12-14, 1915, in which the British won a decisive victory. Having secured their position in Iraq, the British had again turned their attention to Khuzestan in Iran, and by April 21, 1915, they had brought in nearly 13,000 troops and 3,000 horses and

mules to Ahwaz. On April 29, 1915, a group of 1,500 Persian tribesmen attacked a British patrol near the village of Ali Ben-Hussein in the vicinity of Karakheh River, killing about a dozen British troops. Thereafter, the British had gone on the offensive. During May 14-16, 1915, the British had attacked the town of Khafajiah (present-day Susangird) killing a large number of the inhabitants who mostly belonged to the Bani Torof tribes, setting many of the buildings on fire, destroying much of their crops and seizing their livestock. The massacre at Khafajiah, it appears, broke the back of the resistance to the British in Khuzestan. The oil pipeline was quickly repaired during the month of June and the flow of oil to the refinery resumed on July 3, 1915. Having completed the occupation of Khuzestan, the British had immediately resumed their advance along the Tigris in Iraq. On May 31, 1915, the British attacked the town of Amara on the Tigris and completed its capture during June 2-3, 1915. With the capture of Amara, the oilfields and the British position in Khuzestan were secure. Following the capture of Amara, the British had advanced westward along the Euphrates, capturing the town of Suq ash Shuyuk on July 6, 1915, and Nasiriya on July 25, 1915. The capture of these Euphrates towns completed the British occupation of the Basra Vilayet, that is the southern part of Iraq. Thereafter, the British had prepared to push to Baghdad.

The Russians were not to be outdone by the British. On May 17, 1915, the Russian vice-consul in Isfahan was assassinated, and his Belgian companion severely wounded. Russia's response was decisive. On May 22, 1915, a large Russian cavalry force in Tabriz marched south towards Saujbulak, and after routing its Kurdish defenders, occupied the town. It then marched north and without meeting much resistance from the Turks, occupied Urumia on June 1, 1915, thus completing the occupation of Azerbaijan. Upon the occupation of Urumia, the Russians had quickly organized and armed a militia consisting of some 7,000 Nestorian Christians, also known as "Syrians" or "Assyrians." This militia has sometimes been referred to as the Police of the North. The militia had accompanied the Russian army in its advance in western Iran in the spring of 1916, and had committed many atrocities against the Kurds. This militia was also to cause much trouble to the Iranian government in the final year of the war. Concurrently with their offensive in Azerbaijan in late May 1915, the Russians had landed a large force in Enzeli on the Caspian which had quickly continued to Qazvin where it had remained as an ever-present

threat to Tehran. In June 1915, the Russians had advanced into Khorassan and after the occupation of Mashhad, they had advanced as far south as Birjand, while the British had advanced north from Baluchistan, meeting the Russians at Birjand. The Anglo-Russian occupation of eastern Iran came to be known as the East Persia Cordon. The Anglo-Russian force in eastern Iran was increased in August 1915, and on August 22, 1915, the British had decided to extend the railway line from India into eastern Iran.

On July 12 and 13, 1915, meanwhile, the Tangestani tribes of southern Fars had attacked the British forces near Bushire. The British had promptly dispatched a force from Basra which landed in Bushire on August 8, 1915. The British had immediately sacked the Turkish consulate and expelled the consul, prompting sharp diplomatic protests from the Turkish government to the American government. On August 13, 1915, an amphibious assault was made on the main fort of the tribes located in the village of Delwar, some twenty miles from Bushire. The fort and the village were destroyed. Thereafter, intermittent warfare had continued until September 9, 1915, when the tribesmen had attacked in force. This was the opportunity the British had awaited: the British counterattack had inflicted a heavy defeat on the Tangestanis which had suffered heavy casualties. Thereafter, the Tangestanis had ceased being a serious threat to the British.

With matters satisfactorily settled in Bushire, the British attention was again turned to Iraq. In the fall of 1915, the British decided to continue their advance along the Tigris and to push on to Baghdad. The battle of Kut-al-Amara took place on September 26-28, 1915, in which the Turks were forced to evacuate the town and retreated to Ctesiphon, a short distance south of Baghdad, where they took up defensive positions. Although the battle of Kut-al-Amara was considered a British victory, the Turks had escaped relatively unscathed from Kut-al-Amara and were able to regroup to fight another day. It was clear to the Turks that if Baghdad was to be held, a determined stand at Ctesiphon were necessary. In the meantime, Turkish reinforcements had arrived in Baghdad. With the British fully engaged in Iraq, it was up to the Russians to deal with the deteriorating situation in Iran.

## NEW RUSSIAN INVASION OF IRAN

In early July 1915, after a prolonged crisis, the cabinet of Ein-ed-Dowleh resigned, and for seven weeks the country was without a cabinet. On August 3, 1915, the newly arrived British Minister, Sir Charles Marling, had expressed his great anxiety about the situation in Isfahan. In Kermanshah in western Iran, the British and the Russian consuls who had left in May 1915, had tried to return in August 1915, but were prevented from returning by the German consul and his Persian allies. On August 22, 1915, a new cabinet under Mostofi-ol-Mamalek was finally appointed. On the same day, about 2,000 Russian Cossacks stationed in Qazvin had marched towards Tehran, creating panic in the capital. After a day's march, the Cossacks had returned to Qazvin. It was a warning to the new cabinet in Tehran. The situation in Tehran had grown so bad at this time that the British and the Russians had contemplated moving their legations to Qazvin which was occupied by the Russians.

In the fall of 1915, it had become clear that unless decisive action was taken, the British and the Russians were in danger of losing control of the country. In early September 1915, the Jangalis under Mirza Kuchik Khan had attacked the Russians in Gilan and had inflicted numerous casualties on them. On September 13, 1915, perhaps in response to the British massacre of the Tangestanis in Bush-ire, the British vice consul in Shiraz was assassinated, while the British consul in Isfahan was wounded in an attempt to assassinate him. Terrified by the prospects of violence instigated by the Germans and their Iranian sympathizers in Isfahan, the British and the Russians had departed the city for Ahwaz and the protection of the British army. With Isfahan so evacuated, the Russian and the British consuls and residents had also left Yazd and Kerman for the safety of Bandar Abbas. With the assassination of the British vice consul in Shiraz, the British and the Russian Ministers in Tehran had demanded the dismissal of the governor-general Mokhber-os-Saltaneh and his replacement by the well-known anglophile Qavamol-Molk. In October 1915, the Iranian gendarmes in Shiraz had forced Qavamol-Molk to leave the city, and Qavam-ol-Molk had fled to Bushire to be under British protection. Matters had also come to a head in Hamadan where in early November 1915, the Iranian gendarmes had attacked the Cossacks and disarmed them. In the ensuing chaos, the British and the Russian consuls had left the town. The gendarmes had next expelled the British from nearby Soltanabad (Arak) and had seized the British bank. Matters also came to a head in Shiraz where the situation

continued to be tense after the expulsion of Qavam-ol-Molk. On November 21, 1915, despite evidence of freshly arrived Turkish reinforcements, the British attacked the Turkish defensive lines at Ctesiphon, just south of Baghdad. The attack was a costly failure, resulting in large casualties, and the British were forced to retreat back to Kut-al-Amara where they were besieged by the Turks. Emboldened by the British defeat near Baghdad, the gendarmes and the inhabitants of Shiraz had arrested the British consul and nationals on November 24, 1915, and had imprisoned them in a fort near the Persian Gulf.

In early September 1915, a Russian force had landed in Enzeli and had occupied Rasht where it had sacked the Turkish consulate, seized the archives, arrested the consul and paraded the Ottoman insignia in the streets, and after a bloody encounter with the Jangalis, it had continued its march to Qazvin. Considering this force to be insufficient and greatly alarmed at the deteriorating situation, the Russian Minister in Tehran had urged his government to send additional troops to Iran, and the British had also urged the Russians to dispatch additional forces. Having been chased out of numerous cities, the most immediate task facing the Russians and the British was to hold on to Tehran. From early October 1915, there were indications that the Germans and their Persian sympathizers, assisted by the Iranian gendarmes and their Swedish officers, were planning to stage a coup in Tehran and to seize control of the capital. Moreover, the Russians and the British placed little trust in the government of Mostofi-ol-Mamalek to resist the intended coup or the German overtures. On October 15, 1915, Russia had formally warned the Iranian government that an alliance with Germany would not be tolerated, and on October 20, 1915, the Russian government ordered the dispatch of another army into Iran, the first elements of which landed in Enzeli on October 28, 1915. On November 17, 1915, in a manner similar to its advance on August 22, 1915, the Russian army had marched towards Tehran, causing a general panic. While the Shah and the government had contemplated flight from Tehran to Isfahan, many members of the Majlis, along with the German and Turkish envoys had fled the capital to Qum. With the flight of the politicians, the Iranian parliament had ceased to function. A week later, the American minister reported that while the Russians had halted their advance, additional Russian troops continue to land at Enzeli, and on November 29, 1915, Caldwell reports that while the Russians had withdrawn to Karaj, 25 miles northwest of Tehran,

another 15,000 recently arrived Russian troops were marching from Enzeli towards Qazvin. He also informs that the government had decided to remain in Tehran. Meanwhile, the politicians who had left Tehran along with the German envoy had declared a jihad against the Russians and had set about organizing a "national gendarmerie" for the purpose of resisting the Russians and gaining control of Tehran. They were joined by numerous armed tribesmen from Isfahan and Fars and other "mujahids."

In early December 1915, the Russians launched a two-pronged offensive from Qazvin in the direction of Hamadan and Qum. On December 9, 1915, Caldwell reported that a Persian force said to number 12,000-25,000, consisting of gendarmes, tribesmen and mujahids had gathered south of Qazvin with the aim of resisting the southward advance of the Russians who were continuously augmenting their forces. A week later, on December 16, 1915, at a battle near the village of Elchi, the superior Russian army routed the Iranians, killing many, and captured Hamadan after it had been evacuated by its defenders. The gendarmes and the other Iranian defenders retreated to Abbas Abad. Pressing south, the Russians captured Kangavar, 30 miles southwest of Hamadan, on December 24, 1915. Farther to the north, the Russians captured Qum, Saveh and Lalleh Khan in the middle of December 1915. The Iranian force that had evacuated Qum prior to its occupation by the Russians had marched north with the aim of pouncing on the capital. It was a desperate gamble and the Russians were waiting. On December 27, 1915, near the village of Robot Karim, some 25 miles southwest of Tehran, the Russian Cossacks routed the Iranian gendarmes and mujahids. The defeated disorganized forces had hastily retreated south in the direction of Kashan, Soltanabad, Kermanshah and Burujerd. Also on December 27, 1915, the cabinet of Mostofi-ol-Mamalek resigned and Prince Abdol-Hossein Mirza Farman-Farma formed a new cabinet, with Mohammad Vali Khan, Sepahdar Tonekaboni, as minister of war. Having gained ascendancy in Tehran, the Russians and the British had succeeded in forcing the dismissal of the Swedish officers of the gendarmerie.

In January 1916, the Russians had resumed their southward advance. On January 21, 1916, the town of Gharus was captured, and according to press reports, looted by the Russians. By February 7, 1916, Nehavand and Burujerd were in Russian hands. In early February 1916, the Turks had occupied Saujbulak with the intention of advancing on Tabriz. In a battle on

February 24, 1916, the Russians had inflicted a heavy defeat on the Turks and had recaptured Saujbulak. Thereupon they had summarily hanged those inhabitants who had cooperated with the Turks. On February 25, 1916, the Russian army under General Baratoff had advanced on Kermanshah, and captured the city on March 3, 1916. On March 12, 1916, Baratoff captured Karind. In central Iran, the Russian forces advancing from Qum occupied Kashan on March 1, 1916, and on March 19, 1916, occupied Isfahan after a sharp encounter with a force of some 1,000 Bakhtiari tribesmen. In a report of March 13, 1916, the American Minister Caldwell reports that 100,000 Russians troops were engaged in military operations in Iran. Thus by March 1916, the Russians had completed the conquest of the northern half of the country. On March 3, 1916, following the Russian capture of Kermanshah, the Cabinet of Farman-Farma resigned and on March 13, 1916, Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahdar Tonekaboni was appointed Prime Minister and given the title of Sepahsalar Azam.

## COMPLETION OF THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF SOUTH IRAN, 1916

With the defeat of the British army at Ctesiphon on November 21-22, 1915, the remaining 13,000 British troops had retreated to Kut-ol-Amara where they were besieged by the Turks. During January-April 1916, the British had made numerous unsuccessful and costly attempts to lift the siege of Kut-ol-Amara. Finally, faced with starvation and disease, the British government had consented to the surrender of its besieged troops. It was a costly failure: 41,000 in battle casualties plus the surrender of 13,000. Because of its operations in Iraq, the British had remained militarily inactive in south Iran during September 1915 to March 1916. As above described, in this same period of British inaction, the Russians had achieved a spectacular success and had occupied the entire northern half of the country, that is the area assigned to them in the March 1915 Anglo-Russian agreement for the division of Iran. Anxious to claim their entire share of Iran, despite the difficulties in Iraq, the British had dispatched Brigadier-General Sir Percy M. Sykes to Iran. Sykes landed in Bandar Abbas in mid-March 1916, at about the same time as the Russian capture of Isfahan. His ostensible task was to set up a so-called “Persian force” for the maintenance of “law and order” in south Iran. The “Persian force” was to be named the

South Persia Rifles, paid for and officered by the British. But the fact that he had landed at Bandar Abbas instead of Bushire or some other British stronghold indicated that his immediate task was to gain control of Kerman as well as parts of southeast Iran.

Shortly after Sykes' arrival in Bandar Abbas in March 1916, the former governor-general of Fars, Qavam-ol-Molk, assisted by British arms and artillery, had departed Bushire for Shiraz. In a battle near the town of Lar, Qavam-ol-Molk's force had decisively defeated the outgunned Persian gendarmes after which the door to Shiraz was open. Shortly after his victory at Lar, Qavam-ol-Molk was killed in a hunting accident and was succeeded by his 28 year-old son, Ibrahim Qavam, who had entered Shiraz and had inflicted vengeance on those who had driven his father from Shiraz in November 1915. Similarly in Kerman matters had come to a head shortly after Sykes' arrival in Bandar Abbas. The emboldened pro-British faction in Kerman had disarmed the gendarmes and the nationalists. Some 60 Germans and Austrians who had fled Kerman were soon captured by Qavam and imprisoned in Shiraz. With Shiraz and Kerman so "liberated", Sykes had received reinforcements, including Indian artillery, which arrived in Bandar Abbas in April 1916.

On May 17, 1916, Sykes and his newly arrived force set off for Kerman and entered the city on June 12, 1916. Upon arrival in Kerman, Sykes had discovered and arrested the former Turkish ambassador to Afghanistan who had remained in the city. The detained former ambassador and a Swiss national were dispatched to Bandar Abbas to be taken to India for internment. As below described, in May 1916 the British had dispatched a force from India to the southeastern corner of Iran for the purpose of subduing the tribes of the region. En route the prisoners had been rescued and set free by fighters belonging to these tribes. The British had immediately sent additional forces from India, but were unable to find and capture the escaped prisoners. As below described, they had set about "punishing" the unfortunate tribes in the summer of 1916.

The establishment of the so-called East Persia Cordon in the summer of 1915 was noted above. Matters in southeast Iran came to a head in the summer of 1916. The news of the British debacle on April 29, 1916, at Kut-ol-Amara in Iraq had emboldened the Tangestanis who had again attacked the British in Bushire, killing several officials and troops. In addition, the Sarhadi tribes located near the border with India had attacked the British

lines of communication linking India with Birjand. The British had responded quickly. In May 1916, the British had repeatedly attacked the Sarhadis, seizing the village of Khash, the tribes' headquarters, destroyed their crops, seized their livestock, and forced them to submit. In June 1916, as noted above, hostile tribesmen had set free the former Turkish ambassador to Afghanistan who was in British custody and en route to Bandar Abbas. In response, the British had landed a force near the port of Goatr in Iranian Baluchistan, and during July 12 to 19, 1916, had attacked the Dammani and Yar Mohammad Zaii tribes. The British had inflicted heavy casualties on the tribes, seized their livestock and had forced them to pay reparation. In September 1916, the town of Said Abad, east of Kerman, had been seized by the tribesmen who had earlier set free the Turkish Ambassador to Afghanistan. The British had attacked and occupied the town in October 1916. But the ambassador remained at large. Thus by the fall of 1916, southeast Iran was under effective British occupation and the so-called East Persia Cordon ran from the Sea of Oman to the Russian border.

Having set in motion the establishment of a brigade of South Persia Rifles in Kerman, Sykes and his force departed for Yazd on July 28, 1916, and arrived in Yazd on August 14, 1916. Sykes' sojourn in Yazd was very brief because there was already a severe food shortage, and Sykes claims that news had reached him that the Turks and their Iranian allies intended to attack Isfahan and drive out the Russians. Marching on, Sykes arrived in Isfahan on September 11, 1916. A few days later, extensive Anglo-Russian celebrations were held in Isfahan to mark the forced departure of the two allies from Isfahan the previous year. The celebratory gun fire had terrified the inhabitants of Isfahan who did not know what was happening. The Anglo-Russian celebrations and amity notwithstanding, the Russians had made clear to Sykes that they regarded Isfahan and Yazd as part of the Russian zone of Iran. Having overstayed his welcome, Sykes and his force left Isfahan in late September 1916, and made a triumphal entry into Shiraz on November 11, 1916. He was greeted by the new governor-general Farman-Farma who had arrived in October 1916. Almost to the day one year prior, the British consul and nationals in Shiraz had been arrested and imprisoned. The timing and symbolism of Sykes' arrival in Shiraz was not lost. Moreover, by the time of Sykes' arrival in Shiraz in November 1916, the British occupation of the southern half of the country was complete, and

the British controlled the vast area from India to Iraq. Subsequent events only consolidated that control.

Meanwhile, in addition to occupying Shiraz, Kerman, and southeast Iran, the British had dispatched additional forces to Khuzistan in August 1916, and in October 1916, General Sir F. S. Maude, commander of the British forces in Mesopotamia, had visited Ahwaz and the oil fields and had further increased British forces in Khuzistan in November 1916. In December 1916, these forces had made a "circular tour" of the province. Clearly, the British were taking no chances before resuming their advance towards Baghdad in December 1916.

## FAILURE OF THE TURKISH OFFENSIVE IN WESTERN IRAN

On March 3, 1916, it was noted, the Russians had occupied Kermanshah, and on March 12, 1916, they had captured Karind. They resumed their offensive in early May and captured Kasr-i-Shirin on May 7, 1916, and invading Iraq, they captured Ravanduz on May 16, 1916. On June 1, 1916, the Russian army under General Baratoff had attacked Khaniquin in Iraq. The attack was repulsed by the Turks after which the Russians had rapidly retreated towards Kermanshah. Following their victory at Khaniquin, the Turks had gone on the offensive and on July 1, 1916, the Turkish army, accompanied by a large number of Iranian volunteers had occupied Kermanshah. Meanwhile, the Russians had withdrawn to Bistoun, some 15 miles east of Kermanshah. Following the capture of Kermanshah, the Iranian politicians who had fled Tehran in November 1915, set up a rival government in that city. On August 11, 1916, the Turks had captured Hamadan, and the Russians had retreated to Aveh, a mere 24 miles from Qazvin.

With the Turkish advance in western Iran, the supposedly "pro-allied" cabinet of Sepahsalar Tonekaboni had put out diplomatic feelers to the Central Powers thus greatly displeasing the Russians and the British who had forced the resignation of the cabinet. The new cabinet under Vossough-ed-Dowleh was appointed on August 14, 1916. In the meantime, the Russian and British legations had again contemplated withdrawing from Tehran if it became clear that the Turks could not be prevented from capturing the capital. Fortunately for the Allies, the Turks made no real

attempt to advanced farther north than Hamadan. On August 30, 1916, the Russians had recaptured Soltanabad, but on September 18, 1916, the Turks retook the town, and in addition, occupied Nehavand and Dolatabad as well as some other areas in the vicinity of Soltanabad. On September 20, 1916, the Russians had tried to retake Soltanabad and Dolatabad prior to an attempt to recapture Hamadan, but had been repulsed by the Turks after which the Russians had retreated to Saruq. For the next three weeks, intermittent fighting had continued and several towns had changed hands. In early October 1916, the Turks had recaptured Nahavand and Khamseh but had failed to capture Aveh and Saveh.

As noted, following the occupation of Hamadan, the Turks had made no real attempt to march on Tehran. The reason, it turns out, was a Russian offensive in Azerbaijan which threatened to sever the Turkish lines of communication with Iraq. In early September 1916, the Russians won two decisive victories in Azerbaijan. On September 2, 1916, the Russians routed a Turkish army at Sharaf Khaneh, just south of Urumia, and captured 1,800 Turkish soldiers. Shortly after, the Russians had again defeated the Turks at Saqiz. Although the fighting on Iranian soil between the Turks and the Russians had continued until the end of March 1917, by October 1916 it was evident that the Turkish military enterprise in Iran had failed. But it would take another six months for the Russians to drive the Turks out of Iran.

In December 1916, as noted, the British launched their final offensive to capture Baghdad which they occupied on March 11, 1917. The loss of Baghdad was a bitter blow to the Islamic world and especially painful to the Turks. Baghdad had been ruled by the Turks from 1520 to 1622, when it was captured by the Iranians. The Turks recaptured the city in 1638 and until its loss to the British in 1917, Baghdad had been ruled by the Ottomans. It was the beginning of the end for the Turks in Iraq. In late February 1917, as the British neared Baghdad, the Russians had launched an offensive in western Iran. On March 2, 1917, they recaptured Hamadan, and continued their advance, reaching Bistoun on March 8, 1917. On March 11, 1917, the very day that the British entered Baghdad, the Russians defeated the Turks outside Kermanshah and entered the city. Continuing on, the Russians recaptured Qasr-i-Shirin on March 31, 1917, after a stiff resistance by the Turks. With the loss of Qasr-i-Shirin, the defeated Turkish forces evacuated Iranian territory and retreated into Iraq. It had been a

costly failure. Meanwhile, another Russian column had captured Khaniquin on March 22, 1917, and the forward Russian columns had met up with the British at Qizil-Robat and, similar to the Anglo-Russian festivities in Isfahan in September 1916, the two allies had celebrated. But already, Russia was in the throes of revolution.

Well before the onset of the Russian revolution, Iran had plunged into chaos. In a report dated October 12, 1916, the American chargé d'affaires, Jefferson Caffrey, stated that the authority of the government had vanished over most of the country and was very little over the rest. The young Shah was a ceremonial figure with no power, the Majlis had been indefinitely closed, and the constitution was completely disregarded. The financial position of the government was desperate and the only money received consisted of the monthly payments by the Russian and British governments who had taken over the financial control of the country. The British and the Russians were busy organizing military forces which though nominally Iranian, were completely controlled and officered by the two powers.

## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAN

On March 15, 1917, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated and a new provisional government was formed. In a telegram from the Russian foreign minister Milioukoff to the Iranian government informing on the recent changes, the hope and promise of a better future is expressed. On March 20, 1917, Vossough-ed-Dowleh, the Iranian prime minister, had responded to the telegram, expressing the satisfaction of the Iranian government at the turn of events. During the next two months several telegraphic expressions of good will and amity between the two sides had ensued. Soon after the outbreak of revolution, discipline among Russian troops in Iran had vanished. On April 25, 1917, some Russian troops and residents in Tabriz had expelled the Russian consul and had arrested some prominent Russian subjects. In May 1917, when the Russians retreated from Qizil-Robat to Peytak, leaving a token force in Qasr-i-Shirin, it was clear that Russia was incapable of continuing military operations in Iran. On June 21, 1917, they evacuated Qasr-i-Shirin. But farther north in the month of June, the Russians had marched in the direction of Mosul and Suleimanieh, but the offensive had soon ground to a halt. By August 1917, the Russian army in

western Iran consisting of 31,000 infantry, 22,000 cavalry, and 102 artillery units was on the verge of disintegration.

The political situation in Tehran was greatly altered by the Russian revolution. Those politicians who had fled in November 1915, returned, and by May 1917, it was clear that the cabinet of Vossough-ed-Dowleh was on its way out. Starting in June 1917, a wave of political assassinations had greatly unnerved the Iranian public. Vossough-ed-Dowleh resigned on June 12, 1917, a victim of the forces unleashed by the Russian revolution. The most notable action of the new cabinet with Ala-os-Saltaneh as prime minister was to "rescind" the recognition of the South Persia Rifles granted by his predecessor. But political assassinations had continued unabated, and many prominent politicians fearing for their lives had gone into hiding. In October 1917, the cabinet of Ala-os-Saltaneh had resigned, and by November 26, 1917, Iran was still without a cabinet. Shortly after, a new cabinet under Ein-ed-Dowleh was appointed, but it resigned on December 17, 1917. Not until January 17, 1918, did the country get a new cabinet, this time under Mostofi-ol-Mamalek. This cabinet was to last until late April 1918. On May 1, 1918, a new cabinet under Samsam-ol-Saltaneh Bakhtiari was formed, which lasted until early August 1918. On August 6, 1918, a new cabinet under Vossoughed-Dowleh was formed. It was to last until June 1920. Thus in a 13-months span, the country had six cabinets.

With the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917, Russian military operations in the Near East ended. In a declaration of December 3, 1917, addressed to the Moslems of the east, the Soviet government had renounced the Tsarist policies and had proclaimed a brighter future for the Moslems of Persia and the East. It had specifically repudiated the 1907 and 1915 Anglo-Russian agreements for the division of Iran. On December 19, 1917, the Soviet government formally informed the Iranian government of its intention to withdraw all Russian forces from Iran. Peace negotiations between Russia and Turkey began on December 22, 1917, and by the treaty of March 3, 1918, signed at Brest-Litovsk, the Russians and the Turks undertook to evacuate Iranian territory by the end of March 1918. Of course, by then no Turkish troops remained on Iranian soil, and by the end of March 1918, Russian troops had evacuated Iran. Iranians were left to deal with the legacy of the occupation.

# FOREIGN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS: THE "POLICE OF THE NORTH" AND THE SOUTH PERSIA RIFLES

The establishment of the "Syrian" or "Assyrian" militia by the Russians in Urumia in the spring of 1915 was noted above. After the withdrawal of the Russians from Urumia in December 1917, the British and the French became the main source of support for the militia which had been organized into a 4,000-man force also known as the Police of the North. Attempts by the Iranian government to disarm the militia had resulted in much fighting between the Persian Cossacks and the Christian forces in Urumia and Dilman to the north, but the Cossacks had failed to disarm the militia. But the Iranians had persisted and on March 1, 1918, there was a very bloody encounter in Urumia between the Iranian government forces and the militia. More than 300 Cossacks were killed, but the Iranians had failed to subdue the Christian militia. The Iranian government had claimed that the Christians had been assisted and directed by the resident American missionaries, a claim hotly denied by the American government, although the American Minister in Tehran reported in strict confidence that some of the missionaries in Azerbaijan had engaged in activities "quite beyond the scope of their duties." In late March 1918, the Turks had occupied Saujbulak and Ushnoo. On April 16, 1918, they were badly defeated by the Christian forces and forced to retire. Thereafter, according to State Department records, the Christians were guilty of much atrocity in Azerbaijan in the spring of 1918. They remained in control of Urumia until July 1918, when, as below described, with the approach of the Turkish army, they left the city to join the British in Hamadan.

The establishment of the South Persia Rifles by the British in 1916 was referred to above. In January 1917, with the British marching towards Baghdad, the Iranian Prime Minister, Vossough-ed-Dowleh, had sent a telegram to Sykes thanking him for his "restoration of law and order" in the south. The friendly attitude of the Iranian government had greatly facilitated the task of incorporating the old gendarmerie in the new South Persia Rifles. With the capture of Baghdad on March 11, 1917, not surprisingly, the cabinet of Vossough-ed-Dowleh had formally recognized the South Persia Rifles. Vossough-ed-Dowleh resigned in June 1917 and was succeeded by Ala-os-Saltaneh. As noted, the new cabinet had "rescinded" the recognition of the South Persia Rifles, but by then it made no difference

what the Iranian government position was. Sykes had set about "restoring law and order" in Fars and Kerman. The story is told with some relish and in detail by Sykes himself. From April 1917 until May 1918, the British army, with assistance from the South Persia Rifles, had set about "punishing" the smaller tribes of south Iran, while leaving the larger Qashqai tribes unmolested for the time being. It was a policy of divide and vanquish. "Punishment" consisted of attacking and slaughtering the tribes in their rural habitats, seizing their livestock and destroying their crops. Having subdued the smaller tribes, the British had next turned their attention to the larger, more powerful Qashqai tribes. Sykes claims that the initial success of the German offensive on the western front in the spring of 1918 had emboldened the cabinet of Samsam-ol-Saltaneh Bakhtiari which in turn had encouraged the Qashqais to attack the British. Having declared a jihad against the British occupiers, the Qashqais had attacked the South Persia Rifles in May 1918, just at the time when the British were moving a large force from Iraq into northern Iran. In the interim June to August 1918, numerous encounters between the British army and the Qashqais had resulted in large casualties for the tribes, the destruction of their crops, and the usual seizure of livestock. In desperation, the Qashqais had continued to resist. Even as late as October 1918 when the British victories in Palestine and north Iraq had forced the Turks to evacuate all Iranian territory, the Qashqais had continued to fight with predictable result.

## BRITISH OCCUPATION OF NORTHERN IRAN

Having been freed from the claws of the Russian bear, Iran was about to be devoured by the British lion. Even before the withdrawal of the Russians, the British had begun occupying areas previously held by Russia. In early January 1918, British troops from Khaniquin, Iraq, advanced to occupy Qasr-i-Shirin. It was the onset of the British occupation of the northern half of the country. On March 11, 1918, the British had formally notified the Iranian government of their intention to occupy the northern part of the country. But preparations for the invasion of northern Iran had been under way at least since June 1917. Following their victories in Iraq in the spring of 1917 and the capture of Baghdad, the British had diverted their attention and effort to Palestine. After the capture of Jerusalem on December 9, 1917, the British were again ready to advance in Iran. As noted, Qasr-i-Shrin was

occupied in January 1918, and in early February 1918, the British occupied Kermanshah. Hamadan, where the British established their headquarters in Iran, was occupied shortly after, followed by Qazvin where the British halted prior to their advance on the Caspian. Twenty-three years later, in August 1941, the British were to take the same route in their invasion of Iran. In the British parliament in August 1941, much nostalgia and admiration was expressed at the fact that General Wavell's troops in 1941 were taking the same path that General Dunsterville took in 1918.

In the east of Iran, following the Russian withdrawal from Khorassan, the British advanced and occupied Mashhad on March 3, 1918, and quickly advanced to the Russian border. In late March 1918, in response to the British invasion of western Iran, Turkey had dispatched a force to Azerbaijan and had occupied Saujbulak and Ushnoo. Meanwhile, in April 1918, similar to their policy of "punishing" the tribes of Fars, the British had attacked the Kurdish Sanjabi tribe of western Iran, slaughtering many, seizing their livestock and destroying their crops. In a particularly nasty incident on April 11, 1918, as recorded in the archives, British airplanes had bombed the headquarters of the tribe. Not having seen airplanes before, the terrified women and children had taken "refuge" in the nearby Zamkhan River which was in full flow due to the spring snow melt. About 500 had drowned. On April 16, 1918, as noted, the Turks were badly defeated by the Christian militia and forced to retire from Saujbulak and Ushnoo.

In May 1918, in preparation for an attack on the Jangalis of Gilan and advance to Rasht and Enzeli on the Caspian, the British had moved their headquarters from Hamadan to Qazvin. In late May 1918, the Turks had tried to occupy Urumia, but were repulsed by the Christian militia whom the Iranians had failed to disarm. On June 7, 1918, the Turkish army had occupied Tabriz, and had made no attempt to advance eastward for the time being. On June 11, 1918, the British routed the Jaganli defenders at Manjil, opening the road to the Caspian and occupied Rasht and Enzeli shortly after. To block further Turkish advance, and in particular, to prevent Turkish assistance to the Jangalis, the British had quickly sent a force to Zanjan and Mianeh. Turkish failure to aid the Jangalis proved devastating. On July 20, 1918, the Jangalis had attacked Rasht in an unsuccessful attempt to drive out the British, and had suffered heavy casualties. After this costly failure, they had made peace with the British. The "peace" was short lived.

In the meantime, sectarian conflict in Urumia between Moslems and Christians had intensified. The Christians had held their own and had successfully defended against the Turks. By mid-July, having run out of ammunition and supplies, the position of the Christian militia was growing desperate. Shortly after, the Christian population of Urumia had left the city hoping to join the British forces at Hamadan. The Turks occupied Urumia on July 27, 1918. The Christian exodus, said to consist of 70,000 to 80,000 people, had precipitated a crisis in Azerbaijan. The so-called refugees had plundered many villages en route and butchered the inhabitants. In revenge, the Moslem inhabitants had attacked the endless columns of refugees, killing many. By September 1918, some 30,000 Christians had reached Hamadan, most having discontinued their journey and returned to Urumia, and some 5,000 had died on the way.

On August 16, 1918, the British had occupied Baku. In early September 1918, the Turks had advanced from Tabriz in the direction of Mianeh. In an engagement near Mianeh on September 7, 1918, the British had retired and the Turks had occupied Mianeh. The British had immediately sent additional forces to Zanjan for the purpose of resisting further Turkish advance. During the subsequent three weeks intermittent small-scale fighting had continued between Mianeh and Zanjan. On September 15, 1918, the British had withdrawn from Baku in the face of a strong Turkish attack, and the British force had returned to Enzeli from whence it had initially embarked for Baku. It was to be one of the last Turkish successes in the war. Upon withdrawal from Baku, the British force in northern Iran known as Dunsterforce (after its commanding general, L.C. Dunsterville), was reorganized and renamed Norperforce (short for North Persia Force). The change of name was indicative of the British desire to maintain an extended occupation of northern as well as southern Iran.

In September 1918, the British launched their final offensive in Syria and won a decisive victory on September 21, 1918, and captured Damascus on October 1, 1918. By then it was clear that the Turks were no longer able to continue the fight and would sue for peace. But the British were anxious to grab more territory in Iraq, including the city of Mosul, before the advent of a cease fire. The British launched their final offensive in Iraq in late October 1918, and defeated the exhausted remnants of the Turkish army at the battle of Sharqat along the Tigris on October 29, 1918. It was to be the last large scale slaughter of the Turks in Iraq. The next day, the Turkish

Tigris Corps formally surrendered to the British and an armistice was signed to take effect at noon on October 31, 1918. But despite the ceasefire, the British had continued to advance until they occupied Mosul on November 3, 1918. Following the disasters in Syria and northern Iraq, the Turks had begun a rapid withdrawal from Iran. Tabriz was evacuated by October 25, 1918, and by the end of October 1918, all Turkish forces had withdrawn from Iran. By the end of World War I, only British troops remained on Iranian territory as well as the rest of the Near East.

## A LAND OF COUP D'ETAT AND MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

In December 1918, following the end of hostilities, Iran had sent a delegation to the peace conference at Versailles. As described in chapter eight, at the instigation of the British government, the Iranian delegation was refused admission to the peace conference. Denied a hearing, the Iranian delegation had put out a statement on the history of Iran in World War I, and the document is discussed in chapter eight. Having gained de facto control of Iran, Great Britain had attempted to formalize the control through the Anglo-Persian Convention of August 9, 1919. But Britain's attempt to impose the highly unpopular treaty on Iran was hampered by the post-war rivalry between Great Britain and the United States over the Middle East oil. Eventually, after much negotiation and exchange of diplomatic correspondence, an "oil entente" was reached by which Great Britain granted the American oil companies a share of the petroleum resources of Iraq, and in exchange for gaining access to the Iraqi oil, the United States gave de facto recognition of British monopoly of Iranian oil and political control of Iran. The stage was thus set for the coup d'état of February 21, 1921, which brought an obscure and practically illiterate military officer, Reza Pahlavi, to power. Another British coup in 1925 deposed the Qajar Monarchy and placed Reza Pahlavi on the throne. In September 1941, to save the Pahlavi regime, in another coup, the British removed Reza Shah Pahlavi and placed his son on the throne. Yet another coup d'état in 1953 restored the departed Shah to the throne for an additional 25 years. In short, for nearly 60 years Iran became a land of military dictatorship and successive coup d'états, and the Great Famine of World War I was relegated to oblivion.

# NOTES

1. The material in this chapter is derived from the following works by the author, Mohammad Gholi Majd, and the citations therein: 1. *Persia in World War I and Its Conquest by Great Britain*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2003; 2. *Iraq in World War I: From Ottoman Rule to British Conquest*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2006; 3. *Oil and the Killing of the American Consul in Tehran*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2006; 4. *From Qajar to Pahlavi: Iran, 1919-1930*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2008; and 5. *August 1941: The Anglo-Russian Occupation of Iran and Change of Shahs*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2012.

## *Chapter Three*

# The Great Famine of 1917-1919: A Documentary Account

A drought in 1925 had caused anxiety that the events of 1917-1918 might be repeated, and had prompted Wallace S. Murray, the American chargé d'affaires in Tehran, to write: "Persia would appear at least threatened with the situation which arose in 1917-18 when, due to the drought and the destruction of her crops by invading armies, she suffered a famine that carried off, so it is estimated, a third of her population."[1] As below stated in chapter four, the immediate post-famine population of Iran in 1919 was estimated at 10 million by American and British sources. Consequently, Murray's statement implies that 5 million Iranians had perished to starvation and disease. Incredulous and convinced that Murray's 1925 statement must be an error, I made a careful search of the State Department records pertaining to Iran during World War I. The records are rich and previously unused. I discovered that Murray's statement that Iran had lost one-third of its population was an understatement. The reality was even worse. An analysis of the available population figures indicates that 8-10 million, and possibly more, had perished, and Iran was the greatest victim of World War I, and yet a calamity of this magnitude has remained unknown for nearly a century. This chapter will first provide a documentary account of the famine and its duration. The primary sources used are the records of the Department of State and Persian newspaper accounts at the time. It also uses the diaries of several Persian observers who recorded their observations in their journals. "Secondary" sources are the memoirs and observations of British military officers in Iran, the most useful being those of Major-General L.C. Dunsterville, commander of the British forces in west and north Iran in 1918, Major M. H. Donohoe, an intelligence officer assigned to Dunsterville's force, and Major-General Sir Percy Sykes,

commander of the British forces in the south of Iran during 1916-1919. Given that these British accounts were written by first-hand observers and participants immediately after the war, these "secondary" sources are really primary sources. Another important study is that of Major-General W.E.R. Dickson's account of the East Persia Cordon during 1918-1919.

## THE ONSET OF FOOD SHORTAGE, FALL 1916

In a report dated May 20, 1915, the American Consul in Tehran, Ralph H. Bader, provides an overview of the food situation nine months after the outbreak of the war in Europe and six months after the initial Anglo-Russian aggression against Iran. Bader describes the impact of the war on prices of imported and domestic products: "Upon the breaking out of hostilities in Europe last August importations into Persia practically ceased. Articles of foreign production have therefore greatly increased in price, while increases in price of articles produced locally have been slight. Among the articles of local production that have not increased in price are mutton, beef, Persian flour, chickens, eggs and fruit. Rice which is grown on the low lands along the Caspian Sea, has increased in price from 5 cents to 6 cents per pound. The price of sugar has increased from 8 cents to 10 cents per pound; coffee, from 30 cents to 50 cents per pound; tea, from 48 cents to 80 cents per pound; European flour, from 7 cents to 12 cents per pound." Bader concludes with the following: "It will be seen from the above that the cost of living for the native population, whose principal articles of diet are mutton, rice, and bread made from whole wheat flour, has only slightly increased, while the cost of living for foreigners, who consume largely articles imported from Europe, has increased from 30 to 40 per cent. The stock of European goods on hand is gradually being consumed and further increase in the cost of living may be expected."[2] It is thus clear that nine months after the outbreak of the war in Europe, four months after the Russian re-occupation of Tabriz and British occupation of Ahwaz, food remained plentiful. Thereafter, the situation had deteriorated.

In April 1915, as noted in chapter two, immediately after defeating the Turks at Shaiba, outside Basra, the British launched an offensive from Iraq into Khuzestan and quickly occupied the rest of the province and its oil fields, while in May 1915, the Russians landed a force in Enzeli, Gilan, and marched towards Tehran. In June 1915, the Russians marched south from

Tabriz and occupied Urumia and most of Azerbaijan. A report in the *Raad* of October 5, 1915 (No. 10) and entitled, "On Bread Matters," indicates that there was already a shortage of bread in the capital. The article reports that Mohammad Khan, who had been recently appointed as head of the Bureau of Bakeries in place of Matin-ol-Saltaneh, had refrained from going to his office in order to protest the government's inaction on bread matters. The same issue of the newspaper reports that the Finance Ministry has sent telegrams to its agents in different parts of the country instructing them to send grain to Tehran, and that grain was on its way. The *Raad* of October 24, 1915 (No. 25), reports that the Governor of Tehran, Dabir-ol-Molk, had called on the Minister of Finance and had stressed the gravity of the food situation, requesting urgent steps in order to avoid famine and starvation in Tehran. The *Raad* of December 13, 1915 (No. 60), reports that although the government has bought wheat in the provinces, agents of the Finance Ministry in various regions prevent its transport to Tehran. Nevertheless, the newspaper reassures that public that the silos were full and no food crisis was on the horizon.

In the fall of 1915, the Russians launched an offensive intended to complete the occupation of the northern half of the country. Meanwhile, beginning in March 1916, the British set about to complete their occupation of the southern half of the country. The *Raad* of March 16, 1916 (No. 135), just thirteen days after the Russian capture of Kermanshah, reports that the new government of Mohammad Vali Khan Tonekaboni, Sepahsalar, has announced that there is ample food in Tehran, and sufficient quantities arrive daily. The new government had reassured the people that there would be no shortages for the Nowruz festivities. Interestingly, the same issue of the newspaper reports that for the past several days, bakeries in Semnan (100 miles east of Tehran) have been practically closed due to lack of flour and the people of Semnan were in a state of great anxiety. The paper also reports that the eastern part of the country is faced with grain shortage and wheat was being hoarded in Khorassan. The *Nobahar* of June 10, 1916 (No. 1) reports on the deteriorating economic and political situation. It writes that conditions were very unsatisfactory, and disturbing news came from every corner of the land. The paralysis of the government in the face of foreign aggression and occupation, the transgressions of the Russian army against the people, the insecurity due to the breakdown of law and order and the rising brigandage on the roads had all but stopped regular trade,

foreign and domestic. The paper declares that despite the lack of rains in the spring and the locust plague, large amounts of food were being taken out of the country (presumably by the armies of occupation.) The paper concludes that very difficult conditions lay ahead and that the country was being plunged into poverty and famine. The situation in July 1916, nearly two years after the outbreak of the war, is described by Jefferson Caffery, the American chargé d'affaires ad interim, who reports on prices in Tehran: "Prices of goods which are imported are always high at this capital and prices of local products have been forced up on account of conditions created by the war." Clearly, as Caffery's report shows, there had been considerable inflation in 1916 and the exchange rate had appreciated: "At present rate of exchange 1 kran equals $0.143. At normal rate of exchange 1 kran equals $0.0875."[3] Given that the British had ceased payment of oil royalties since early 1915 (chapter six), and given that regular foreign commerce had all but ceased, the sharp appreciation of the kran could only have been due to increased purchase of foodstuffs by the foreign armies. But, with barley selling for two cents a pound, a brief respite was provided by the harvest of 1916. Thereafter, the situation had deteriorated.

The *Raad* of July 6, 1916, contains reports of disorders in front of bakeries as people had protested the scarcity and high price of bread. In response, many bakers had refused to bake and had closed shop. The government, in response, had detained many bakers, but the paper reports that despite government action, "bakers have refrained from opening their shops and resume baking." The paper blames the rising price of food, especially rice and cooking oil, on middlemen and caravan owners. It notes that in response to an acute scarcity of bread, "bakers have gained an enviable position, and large crowds gather in front of bakeries and the government takes no action to relieve matters. The poor and the weak are under great pressure." Under the circumstances, the government had tried to reassure the people. The *Raad* of August 26, 1916 (No. 228), reports that the government had acquired 82,000 kharvars (24,000 tons) of wheat from the province of Tehran and the Ministry of Finance had ordered that it be brought to the capital. The *Raad* of September 18, 1916 (No. 243), reports that the Minister of Interior in the new cabinet of Vossough-ed-Dowleh, Sepahdar-e-Rashti, and Ghavam-ed-Dowleh, the Minister of Public Welfare, had met with the leaders of the bakers guild to discuss the scarcity and high price of bread. The bakers had agreed to maintain a price of 30

shahis per *maun* until the government wheat supplies, above referred, reached Tehran, after which they promised to lower the price of bread.

By October 1916, it was clear that a grave crisis was looming. In a dispatch of October 9, 1916, Caffery writes: "I have the honor to report that the food supply is becoming a serious question here in Teheran; on account of the shortages of supplies of all kinds, especially of wheat, barley, rice, hay and straw, prices have become abnormally high and the poor people are suffering intensely. Long lines of the populace wait for hours outside of the baker shops for an opportunity to purchase very inferior bread at extremely high prices. The bakers are using barley and various substitutes instead of wheat to make this bread." He adds: "The price of sugar went up as high as one dollar and thirty five cents per pound. All kinds of forage are scarce and the supplies procurable are often of an inferior quality. The same conditions exist as to prices and supplies of coal, charcoal and naphta, and gasoline is not procurable." He concludes: "The state of the drug business is even more deplorable, as it is impossible to find, in Teheran, many articles employed in that trade."[4] One week later, Caffery again reports on the looming crisis: "I have the honor to report that the question of the supply of bread in Teheran has become very serious, as the quantity of wheat in the capital at present is entirely insufficient to meet the needs of the inhabitants. As the populace live almost exclusively on native bread and cheese, for them the matter is a vital one." Bread riots had broken out: "Yesterday there were riots in the city, the chief participants being women, and a mob attacked the building occupied by the Ministry of Interior." Caffery concludes: "The government has promised to take some measures to relieve the situation and if they do not succeed the situation here will soon be distressing."[5]

Similarly, in an entry in his diary in the fall of 1916, Qahraman-Mirza Salur, Ain-ol-Saltaneh, a nephew of Nasser-ed-Din Shah and an enterprising landowner who had taken up residence in the mountainous Alamut region of Qazvin for the duration of the war, points to the approaching crisis. The war and aggression against the country, now into its second year, combined with a lack of rain, had made it all but impossible for the people to earn a living. "What have we done to deserve this, and what has God in store for Iran? With great difficulty, we scratched a simple living from the land, and even that is being taken from us. In Qazvin and vicinity, there is such terror and anxiety the like of which no one recalls. In addition to their own

troubles, the people of Alamut are worried about Tonekabon, for two-thirds of their livelihood comes from Tonekabon. May God have pity on us."[6]

## THE ONSET OF FAMINE

In an entry of April 19, 1917, Ain-ol-Saltaneh writes: "This is a bad year. There was little rain in the winter and now 28 days into the spring, there has not been a drop of rain. The streams are dry, and all grass in the fields and orchards has withered. The spring wheat and barley crop is practically lost. In Tonekabon, only a third of the rice area has been cultivated. No one recalls such a dry season." Ain-ol-Saltaneh then adds that according to a report in the newspaper *Raad*, in the early days of the Persian new year (March 21, 1917), on average 520 persons had died per week as compared to the "usual" 300, an indication that 220 persons died of hunger per week.[7] In an entry a few days later, Ain-ol-Saltaneh writes: "Famine and hunger prevail in all parts of the country. Moslems and peoples of all faiths are dying. In Qum, currently, fifty die each day. In Hamadan, 30,000 have registered as destitute. In Tehran, the reporter for *Raad* saw with his own eyes a group of old men and women who were taking sheep blood from the slaughter house to feed themselves and their children. A dead camel found in a ditch had been stripped of all flesh and hide, and during the night even the bones were taken."[8] Quoting a reliable source, he adds that in Tehran "each day at least 100 persons die of hunger in the streets and the number is rapidly increasing."[9]

Matters would only get worse, and some newspapers had sought a scapegoat. The *Nobahar* of July 26, 1917 (No. 17) reports that poverty and hunger was everywhere. The people were angry and the government helpless. Tehran had become the center of corruption and evil. The paper asks if His Majesty the Shah was aware of what transpired in the lawless towns and barren plains of the country. It asks if London, Petrograd, Berlin or Constantinople were the source of the misfortune. No, the paper claims, "we know and His Majesty knows," that foreigners were not responsible; the source of the misfortune was in Tehran, that is the corrupt politicians and the greedy hoarders. "The enemy has always been in Tehran," declares the newspaper. The *Nobahar* of July 29, 1917 (No. 18) claims that the wheat shortage in Tehran was due to hoarding and speculation and the wickedness of the bakers. It reports that each day large numbers gathered

for hours in front of the bakeries and went home empty handed and hungry. The *Nobahar* of July 31, 1917 (No. 19) again comments on the chaotic scenes in front of the bakeries where desperate hungry people gathered for hours and went away empty handed. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 9, 1917 (No. 3) reports that the governor of Kerman had been instructed to permit merchants from Yazd to buy grain and transport it to Yazd where hunger was widespread. The governor had replied that grain from Kerman was "diseased" and could not be transported.

The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 15, 1917 (No. 6): "Yesterday in front of a (Tehran) bakery in the district of Darvazeh-Qazvin, a woman collapsed after having waited for several hours. The other women managed to revive her, but she died after half an hour. Who is responsible for such happenings? Is the Shah of Iran saddened by the death of his subjects? Does he care?" Evidently, all the government could do was try to reassure the people, with little success. The *Iran* of August 18, 1917, reports: "As a result of the Government's efforts plenty of grain is now coming into the city and yesterday the price of barley dropped from thirty five to thirty tomans per kharvar."[10]

The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 30, 1917 (No. 12) has a report entitled, "Poor Qazvin." The paper reports that Qazvin and villages in that region had faced food shortages since early 1917, and people had slaughtered their livestock for consumption or for sale. Many rural inhabitants had abandoned their villages and had headed to Tehran where they hoped conditions were better, only to be disappointed. Many had gone to Tonekabon in Manzandaran where they had succeeded in procuring small quantities of rice, but the local officials prevented any grain from leaving the area, causing great inconvenience to buyers and sellers. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 2, 1917 (No. 13), reports that bakeries had reduced baking due to a scarcity of flour, and that they were adding all sorts of extraneous matters to their bread. The paper adds: "Because the officials and supervisors of bakeries do not consume regular bread, they have no idea of the situation of the poor and the weak who manage to scrape a couple of krans after toiling from sunrise to sunset, and after hours of waiting at a bakery, manage to buy a piece of bread totally unfit for consumption. We draw the special attention of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Finance to this lamentable situation, and beg for immediate and effective action." The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 13, 1917 (No. 18)

reports on the scarcity of bread in Zanjan. It adds that a group of women had thrown stones at the governor's house and had set fire to the house of a man said to be exporting flour to Rasht. They had then taken the man, Hajji Mehdi Tajjer, hostage, beating him severely, and forced him to hand over his entire stock of grain. The same issue of the paper reports on grain shortage in such places as Yazd, Qazvin, Kashan, Semnan, Saveh, and Kermanshah, adding that most of the stores were closed and the people were extremely anxious and fearful. The bread situation was extremely grave in Kermanshah, where people feared for their lives, honor and property. The people of Semnan had gathered in the telegraph office, besieging Tehran to send help. It adds that from sunset to sundown, all the notables of the city gathered at the telegraph office. All the stores were closed and the bakeries no longer functioned. The situation was desperate. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 18, 1917 (No. 20) reports that some 4,000 persons had occupied the government buildings in Zanjan to protest the bread situation. The paper adds: "There has been no decrease in the amount of mischief and intrigue by the leading bakers. Every day and by any means possible, they take advantage of the situation to rob and apparently the leadership of the bakers' guild fully acquiesces." The *Iran* of September 21, 1917: "Lack of grain is producing a famine throughout Persia. The effect of the grain shortage are especially felt at Kashan and no plan can make the situation there better, since it is forbidden to take any grain to Kashan from Khoom or Sultanabad, the surplus grain from these localities being taken for the northern cities."[11]

On September 24, 1917, Caldwell had written to the State Department informing that he could no longer live on his salary in Tehran. There were two reasons. First an enormous increase in prices since the beginning of the war. Secondly, the kran had appreciated to nearly 19 cents, whereas the State Department continued to use the pre-war rate of 8.75 cents per kran. Since Caldwell's salary was paid in dollars, he received less than half of the number of krans. Previously he received 11 3/7 krans per dollar. Now he received about 5 krans per dollar. And besides, prices had increased enormously. He explains the situation as follows: "You see, Persia having in effect a silver standard, the war has increased the value of the silver in the kran to about double its normal value, but the purchasing power of the kran, owing to the terrific rise in the cost of all commodities, is only about 25% of what it was when I came here three years ago." He gives an indication of

the high cost of living: “I venture to assert that with the increased prices prevailing in America, the cost price of all foodstuffs, clothing and other necessities used here by us is from three to ten times, on the average, what these same things cost in the United states. E.g. sugar costs $1.00 per pound; a ten cent box of soda costs $1.25; coffee costs $3.50 per pound; tea about $3.00 per pound; a five dollar pair of shoes, $20.00, etc. Similar prices prevail for most commodities, and the quality of the same is so inferior that they would not be used by ordinary persons at home. Even the prices of foodstuffs produced here have risen enormously.” Caldwell was asking for a salary increase and the application of the existing exchange rate instead of the pre-war rate.[12]

In a dispatch entitled “Poverty and Suffering in Persia,” dated October 4, 1917, Caldwell writes: “I have the honor to report that there is such a food shortage, especially of wheat and bread products throughout all parts of Persia, but especially in the northern parts and around and in Teheran, that there is already much privation and suffering ere winter has set in. It cannot be doubted that deaths and starvation will multiply this winter… Even at this time of year food products are the highest in price known for generations, and the scarcity of grains, fruits and cereals is truly alarming.” He reports that sugar remained one dollar per pound, “though recent importation from India has reduced the price some twenty-five percent.” Caldwell describes the scene at the bakeries: “the great bulk of the population, being of peasant class, subsist on bread alone, which is treble its normal price, and very scarce and the supply wholly insufficient. At the public bakeries great crowds gather waiting each his turn or chance to buy, and are frequently sent away disappointed and hungry. Police officers are stationed at these public bakeries to preserve order and hold back the insistent and hungry hordes and crowds, with the result that frequent rioting happens and some blood-shed has taken place.” Caldwell describes some of the measures taken to alleviate the situation: “In order to alleviate the condition the government has sought to furnish wheat from taxes collected in kind to the bakeries at less than the bakers can buy it outside, but this has not, so far, proved to be of much help. Strong measures have been taken to prevent the usual cornering and hoarding of the food supply, and the entire matter has been placed in the hands of Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh, the Zoroastrian in whose integrity and fairness every one has the utmost confidence, but the situation is yet desperate.” Caldwell concludes:

"beggars multiply and hundreds swarm the streets, piteously crying and begging, and at times in their desperation assaulting the besieged. Similar conditions are reported from all parts, provinces and cities of Persia."[13]

The *Zaban-e-Azad* of October 16, 1917 (No. 31) had published a declaration by the government. Holders of grain were invited to sell their stocks to the government at a "fair" price. Otherwise, the government would seize any wheat discovered and pay only 30 tomans per kharvar. In a telegram dated October 22, 1917, Caldwell reports: "Provinces show alarming lack of foodstuffs and worst failure of years is daily increasing."[14] The gravity of the situation in the fall of 1917 is again described by Caldwell in a dispatch of October 24, 1917: "I have the honor to append herewith a list of prevailing local retail prices of a few of the most commonly used commodities. These are figured in dollars, the exchange rate of which is, of course, taken into consideration." He adds: "As winter has not yet set in, it is generally expected that these already enormous prices will materially advance soon." Caldwell gives the "Present prevailing prices of some commodities in Teheran, Persia." Wheat, $7-9 per bushel; barley, $5-6 per bushel; flour, $0.50-.60 per pound; apples, $12-15 per bushel; alfalfa, $80-90 per ton; coal, $50-55 per ton; fire-wood, $30-32 per ton; kerosene, $1.60 per gallon; and shoes, $18-30 per pair.[15] In a dispatch dated November 8, 1917, Caldwell reports on the high cost of living and the spiraling inflation, with prices rising daily: "I have the honor and inclination to report that the almost unbelievable cost of living at this post, which has prevailed since the beginning of the war, and especially for the last two years, during which practically all importations have ceased, continues to advance daily." He adds that prices "are now from six to ten times what they were when the war began." Added to inflation was the appreciation of the nominal value of the kran: "The exchange value of Persian money has doubled, and in addition commodity costs have risen enormously, and it is therefore impracticable and impossible for us here to draw our salaries in America and then exchange our private drafts for local money, which method is possible in countries where their money is depreciated." He concludes: "The matter is mentioned merely in order that the Department may be advised and aware of some of the difficulties and hardships endured here."[16]

The *Iran* of November 2, 1917: "The members of the Foreign Office have sent a request to the Prime Minister asking that 3% of their salaries for

one year be advanced to them now. They desire to use this money for taking care of some of the numerous poor people in the city, supplying them with lodging, fuel, food and clothing, because they believe that many of the poor will die of cold and starvation during the winter." The paper also reports: "Mr. Alexander Toumaniantz, the banker, has rented some 20 rooms in the bazaar here for housing about 30 of the poorest beggars in the city during the winter. He will also furnish them with the necessary food and clothing." The paper also adds: "At present in Kazvin wheat costs 46 tomans per kharvar and barley 35 tomans. (1 kharvar equals nearly 11 bushels.)" The *Nobahar* of November 13, 1917 (No.60) reports that in the streets and alleys of Tehran only starving people and the abandoned and unclaimed corpses were to be seen. The scenes at the bakeries were dreadful as well as pitiful. Whatever the bakers baked, the Cossacks took, pushing back starving women and children, and even took their bread. The *Nobahar* of November 15, 1917 (No. 61) reports that in every city and hamlet in the country, large numbers died every day from hunger. The paper adds that Sardar Bahador daily purchases 100 *mauns* of bread and distributes it to the needy in Tehran. The paper adds that if other wealthy people followed the example of Sardar Bahador, many more could be saved.

In an entry in his diary dated Monday, November 19, 1917, Mohammad Vali Khan Tonekaboni Sepahsalar, a former Prime Minister, writes: "It is now several days since I traveled from Shemiran to Tehran where unbelievable famine and chaos prevail. Wheat is 55 tomans per kharvar, rice 70 tomans, and barley 45 tomans, way beyond the means of the less well-off and even the ordinary people. In the five months it was in office, the cabinet of Ala-os-Saltaneh and Mohtashemol-Saltaneh, his Minister of Finance, squandered away the entire stock of stored grain. It is now four days since Ain-ed-Dowleh is again Prime Minister. He sent for me and asked me to take over the bread problem. Evidently, they could not find a bigger idiot than me. They neither have grain nor money, and the country is in utter chaos. Not a drop of rain has fallen."[17] The *Nobahar* of November 20, 1917 (No. 63), reports that each day large number of destitute people, men, women and children, arrive in Tehran from other regions and live on the streets or in abandoned shops. The same issue of the paper has this report: "The newspaper has learned from a private source that on the morning of the day before yesterday, Mirza Abol-Ghassem Khan suddenly grabbed a copper tray from a bakery shop near the silos, and made

a run for it. The policeman on duty caught him, and after restoring the tray to its owner, took him to the police station. Under interrogation, he confessed to other robberies. Consequently, ten police officers and a lieutenant were sent to search his house. After entry, a policeman removed a filthy quilt that was lying in a corner of a room, and found the bodies of a small boy and a small girl who had died of hunger. At the other corner of the room, the man's wife was distraught from grief and hunger." The *Nobahar* of November 20, 1917 (No. 63) reports that the government and wealthy merchants had begun setting up places to house and feed the destitute. The paper reports that a group of wealthy merchants had got together and each had pledged a monthly sum to aid the poor. The largest donor was Moin-ol-Tojjar Bushehri who had pledged 500 tomans per month. Hossein Amin-ol-Zarb and the Bonakdaran brothers had pledged lesser amounts. The smallest pledge was 5 tomans per month. The situation in Yazd was desperate. The same issue of *Nobahar* reports that to relieve hunger, Yazdi merchants had bought wheat in Kerman and Rafsanjan, but the governor of Kerman had again refused permission to transport the wheat. Eventually the central government had ordered the governor to allow 1,000 kharvars of wheat to be sent to Yazd. The governor had flatly refused.

The *Raad* of November 22, 1917: "Lately the Governor of Isfahan called a meeting of the rich people and the mullahs at his palace in order to form plans for helping the poor. They raised the sum of 50,000 tomans in order to help supply the poor people with the necessities of life. It is reported from Isfahan that the people of that district need 130 kharvars of grain daily and therefore a supply of almost 31,000 kharvars is needed for the period of the eight months before the new harvest can be gathered, but the supply of grain to be found in that district totals about 6,000 kharvars. Wheat is 70 tomans per kharvar." The newspaper reports on other areas: "A report from Tabriz states that many persons die daily from hunger at Soudj-Bulak… At Khoom and Meshed people have taken refuge in the telegraph offices for lack of food." Information on food prices: "At Julfa in Azerbaidjan bread now sells at 14 krans per maun (about forty cents per pound)." Some Tehran prices, with Persian measures translated into standard measures and prices converted into dollar equivalent: "Wheat $10.00 per bushel. Barley $4.85 per bushel. Wheat straw $44.00 per ton. Alfalfa $80.00 per ton. Soft coal $50.00 per ton. Charcoal $85.00 per ton. Potatoes $5.00 per bushel. Rice 30 cents per pound. Poor quality home-

made soap 55 cents per pound." The *Raad* of November 24, 1917: "The Governor of Ardebil wires the Central Government that that city lacks 15,000 kharvars of wheat for the food of the inhabitants till the end of the year, and requests permission to bring in that amount from outside." In Astara: "There has been a great shortage of bread in this city for over a month and those who have it sell their bread at the rate of 8 krans per maun (about 30 cents per pound)." The situation in Tehran: "A session of the Food-stuff Committee was held last evening. The Committee has already prepared 60,000 bread tickets for the same number of the poor of the city, a list of whom the Police Department has procured. These tickets will be delivered to different subdivisions of the Police to be distributed among the poor of the ward." The *Raad* of November 27, 1917, contains a report on the situation in Kurdistan: "For a long time the bread situation has grown more and more serious and now bread cannot be found. All grain is very scarce and people do not know how to satisfy their hunger. A number of persons die daily from hunger. Many persons believe that in the course of two months all the inhabitants of Kurdestan will be dead… Every day a great number of men and women die of starvation. The Russians have gathered all the barley for their horses. They pay only 5 to 6 rubles for a cow and 2 to 3 rubles for a sheep." The *Raad* of November 28, 1917: "The Governor of Isfahan wires the Ministry of Interior that most of the bakery shops are closed and that many persons are dying of hunger." In Tehran: "Most of the bakery shops are closed now. Bread is very scarce and men women and children go crying though the streets." The *Raad* of November 30, 1917, on conditions in Hamadan: "The people wire to the Government saying bread is very scarce and many persons are starving to death. Wheat sells at 100 tomans per kharvar and barley at 90 tomans."[18]

In early December 1917 (Rabi-al-Awal 1336), Emad-ol-Saltaneh in Tehran had written to his brother, Ain-ol-Saltaneh, in Alamut. He writes: "The drought and the prevailing famine here is indescribable. You just can not imagine what transpires here and the terror under which the people live. But at these fabulous prices, those who, like yourself, own stocks of grain, assuredly cannot complain."[19] In a telegram dated December 10, 1917, Caldwell reports on the worsening conditions: "Unmitigated famine conditions throughout Persia as a result of crop failure and war, many starve daily. Foodstuffs extremely scarce and prices unbelievable. Local relief inadequate and committees unable to relieve situation."[20] The *Nobahar* of

December 11, 1917 (No. 71) reports that Dabir-ol-Molk, the governor of Tehran, had established poor houses in the Shahre-no district where the poor were given food and clothing and an opportunity to bathe. The *Settareh-e-Iran* of December 30, 1917 (No. 87) carries a letter to the government in Tehran from a Hamadan mullah named Mojtahedzadeh Hamadani. The cleric wrote that large numbers had arrived in the city from the surrounding villages in the hope of finding food and shelter. The writer declares that what is happening in Hamadan is a veritable *ashura*, where every day thousands of hungry women and their emaciated trembling children gather in front of the bakeries and leave empty handed to continue their hungry wanderings in the bitter winter cold in streets full of dead bodies. Many died of cold and hunger in the streets and their bodies were left unburied. The writer asks, "Oh God, why is this happening? Why is humanity so cruel? Why so much chaos? When will this cabinet crisis end and measures taken to assist us?"

The *Nobahar* of January 10, 1918 (No. 86), comments on the large number of unclaimed and unburied corpses left on the streets of Tehran, and adds that "neither the dead nor the living know where to turn." The paper reports that to escape from the cold many people slept in the mosques where they were also given food. Later it was decided that the mosques should be used only for sleeping and that food be only given in the poor houses. Meanwhile, the government had tried to convey a less serious picture. In the *Raad* of January 11, 1918, the following is contained: "It is reported by the police that during the last week 51 persons died of hunger and cold in the streets of Teheran." No one could have believed the figure. The same issue contains a report on famine relief effort in Tehran: "Up to the end of December the Central Charity Committee (an organization made up entirely of Persians) has accomplished the following for the poor of the city: secured the garden of Etemad Hozoon, with much houseroom; supplied the necessary furniture and heat; set aside a separate garden for female paupers and children; cared for 1,000 persons; made a bath for them; supplied the necessary clothes; supplied a daily ration of tea, soup and rice; treated the sick; taken care of pregnant women and supplied orphan babies with milk; established a hospital with 30 beds; created a factory for the weaving of carpets by the women and children, where already 8 looms are being used; [and] appointed a teacher to give religious instruction to the children."

In a report dated January 15, 1918, Caldwell writes: “The poorer classes live almost entirely on bread and rice. Wheat costs from fifteen to twenty dollars per bushel, though quite a supply could be had at these prices. Rice costs from fifty cents to two dollars per pound, and considerable quantities may be had. These prices, of course, take into consideration the present rate of exchange.” He concludes: “The Persian Government is cooperating with a local relief committee, composed of American missionaries and others, and is furnishing some rice and grain gratis and additional amounts at cost.”[21] In Kermanshah, bakers were mixing white soil with their flour. A letter from E.A. Douglas of the American Hospital in Tehran to Caldwell, dated January 15, 1918, states: “A letter of some weeks ago from Mrs. F.M. Stead, Kermanshah, spoke of such scarcity of grain that the public bakeries were mixing white earth with their flour to make it go further.”[22]

Meanwhile, the *Raad* had continued to paint a less alarming picture, overwhelming evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. According to the *Raad* of January 16, 1918, the situation was “improving” in Isfahan: “The Governor of Isfahan wires that as there has been a great deal of rain and snow lately, there is plenty of grain on the market and it is believed that there will be enough to last until the next crop. There is enough bread for everybody and most days some is left over night. Wheat which sold for 150 tomans a kharvar is now selling at 65 tomans.” In contrast, the *Settareh-e-Iran* of January 17, 1918 (No. 95) reports that “the vast majority” of the people of Tehran were suffering from hunger. The pitiful scenes on the streets were testimony to the dissolution and demise of a people. Not a day passed without thousands dying. It asks on whose hands lies the blood of these innocent people whose bodies are left unclaimed on the streets. It warns the people that the number of those dying is increasing by the hour, and the Iranian race was in danger of extinction. The *Raad* of January 20, 1918, had continued its policy of minimizing the tragedy. It wrote: “During the last few days a number of persons have died of cholera at Barfaroosh and other nearby places on the Caspian Sea.”

In a telegram dated January 22, 1918, Caldwell reports: “Relief need urgent for different cities. Report several deaths daily. Limited amount of wheat, rice, food stuffs could be purchased throughout the provinces through the Persian Government which fixes prices. Medical supplies would be most difficult. Importation of food stuffs and supplies

impracticable if not impossible. Prices exorbitant, wheat 15 to 20 dollars per bushel… Persian citizens and authorities cooperating but task too great for them alone. One local organization spends $20,000 monthly in Teheran but cares for only ten per cent of city's needy. Conditions are similar in all the provinces."[23] The *Raad* of January 28, 1918, contains the following on conditions in Qum: "The condition in the city of Khoom is most deplorable in respect to food stuff. During the past week more than 50 persons died there of hunger and cold, and a number of them have been left unburied. A number of the people have only sheep's blood for food." The paper reports on the proposed opening of government bakeries in Tehran in its issue of January, 29, 1918: "The Government is planning to open 20 bakery shops in order to sell bread to the poor at a low price, and other bakers may sell at any price they wish." The *Nobahar* of January 29, 1918 (No. 91) reports that Mostofi-ol-Mamalek, the Prime Minister, had donated six months of his salary (3,000 tomans) to help the poor. Amir Mofakham Bakhtiari had donated five months of his salary to medical clinics treating the poor, and that his son, Morteza Gholi Khan, had given 20 kharvars of grain to feed the poor. The *Nobahar* of January 31, 1918 (No. 92) reports on the formation of a committee representing the wealthy in the district of Hassan Abad for the purpose of aiding the poor.

On February 1, 1918, Caldwell telegraphs: "Famine conditions unabated."[24] Meanwhile, the *Raad* of February 5, 1918, had reported on the number of famine deaths in Tehran: "The Governor of Teheran reported to the Ministry of Interior that during the last 20 days the number of deaths, mainly due to famine conditions, in Teheran amounted to 520 persons."[25] No one could have placed any credence on the latter figure. In another press dispatch, Caldwell provides press clippings on the famine.[26] On February 14, 1918, Dr. Samuel Jordan of the American College telegraphs: "Forty thousand destitute Teheran alone. People eating dead animals. Women abandoning their infants."[27] Similarly, on February 14, 1918, Seyed Mohammad Kamareh-i had taken a stroll in Tehran. He reports in his diary that the streets were filled with the cries of hungry men, women and children, many of whom were on the verge of death. In the bazaars, everyone was trying to steal something. He saw a woman who was trying to sell a handsome copper vase, and the buyer would only buy it as scrap metal, barely enough for a piece of bread. He saw a young man who was

trying to sell his own hat.[28] The *Settareh-e-Iran* of February 21, 1918 (No. 110) reports that a committee of wealthy Hamadanis has been formed and was taking care of 2,000 destitute.

## FAMINE AND CHOLERA, SPRING 1918

On March 1, 1918, Caldwell telegraphs: "Cabinet tenders resignation on account of political and famine conditions."[29] In an entry in his diary dated Monday, March 4, 1918, Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahsalar Tonekaboni wites: "Famine continues unabated. Wheat has reached 110 tomans per kharvar, and the day before yesterday, the Shah sold his wheat at that price to the poor people. Rice is 100-120 tomans per kharvar, and barley goes for 80 tomans. All the bakeries are closed and the hungry people try to bring bread from the villages. For the past two days, bread has reached 12 krans per maun, up from 9-10 krans. I have been feeding 400 needy people a day, and in addition I have been giving 1 kran each to 100 others. God is my witness that I have spent over 200,000 tomans to date, and I sold my wheat at the bargain price of 30-40 tomans. Currently, at least 50 die a day from hunger."[30] The *Settareh-e-Iran* of March 5, 1918 (No. 114) had published an announcement by a group calling itself the "Association of Azerbaijani Residents of Tehran," concerning the coming of Nowruz, the new year. It reads: "Whoever sees the emaciated hungry children sitting by the lifeless bodies of their mothers in the streets knows that this is a time for mourning and not festivities. For this reason, the Association of Azerbaijanis has instructed its members to devote the usual Nowruz expenditures to aid the hungry." The *Nobahar* of March 10, 1918 (No. 107) had carried a declaration by the Union of Young Democrats addressed to the "Wealthy Hoarders!" It reads: "It is now more than six months that every day vast numbers of our impoverished and helpless people die from your brutal oppression. You have shamelessly garnered and hoarded the people's food! Further patience will only embolden you. We can no longer bear to see our helpless compatriots die of famine and cold! We warn you that unless by the beginning of the year you open up your silos and give the food to the poor and needy, we, the Young Democrats, will forcefully do it for you. Be advised that we are not bluffing. We neither fear the anger of Your Excellencies, nor the black police dungeons!"

In addition to famine, cholera exacted a terrible toll. Ain-ol-Saltaneh reports that cholera, also known as "death by diarrhea," had created terror among the people, high and low, and many had stopped eating fruit. He writes: "I read in the newspaper that it had killed one million people. If each 12 krans that the government pays for the funeral of an unclaimed corpse had been initially spent on prevention, not so many would have died… Most families have spent so much on doctors and drugs that they are left with no furnishings nor can they afford bread. They are destitute and must now beg."[31] Ain-ol-Saltaneh describes the situation in Qazvin in the spring of 1918. Price of wheat had reached 130 tomans per kharvar, at least a twenty-fold increase over its "normal" price; barley sold for 100 tomans per kharvar, as were legumes such as peas and lentils. The hungry people of Alamut were going to Tonekabon in the hope of acquiring rice, but the local officials in Tonekabon forbade its transport. "These hungry people return empty-handed and all they can do is to curse the authorities." Dead and dying were everywhere; according to eyewitnesses, "In the streets and alleys, the dead and the dying were scattered. Diseases like cholera and the plague were exacting a terrible toll. Those who did not die immediately, went about pale faced and emaciated, barely able to walk." Bad as it was in Qazvin, other places such as Hamadan, were even worse.[32]

In early February 1918 (Jamadi-ol-Aval 1336,) the Tehran police had reported the number of deaths in Tehran for the previous twelve months at 48,000. Mocking the figure, Ain-ol-Saltaneh adds that "each day in Tehran, a 1000 people die of famine and cholera alone." He adds that the food shortage was worse in Qazvin, "but the number of death is lower than in Tehran."[33] In an entry in his diary dated Monday, March 12, 1918, Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahsalar Tonekaboni writes: "We have had very good rains recently thus relieving some anxiety, but wheat remains at 100 tomans, barley 75 tomans, and rice 120 tomans per kharvar. Same with legumes. Tehran is in turmoil and the Shah has retired to Farah Abad and dare not return. The situation is awful. At least 300 persons die of hunger in Tehran every day."[34] On March 16, 1918, Schuler, secretary of the American Relief Committee in Persia, telegraphs Charles Vickery in New York: "Appalling distress continues, hundreds dying. Feeding about twenty thousand, Teheran, but relief works extends Meshed, Hamadan, Kazvin, Kermanshah and Sultanabad."[35]

On April 17, 1918, Caldwell telegraphs: “Famine growing worse, disorder continues northwest Persia.”[36] On May 4, 1918, Jordan telegraphs Vickery in New York: “Accept our thanks for seventy-five thousand. Famine conditions unexpectedly increasing and are accompanied by a great epidemic typhoid, typhus. Same conditions in other Persian cities. Food stuffs almost unobtainable; prices enormous; people eating grass, dogs, dead animals, even human beings. If possible send additional hundred thousand. Could use more. Signed Jordan.”[37] On May 25, 1918, Jordan telegraphs Vickery: “Famine much worse. Present expenditures two hundred thousand a month, but only partially meeting the existing distress. Send if possible two hundred fifty thousand. Signed Jordan.”[38] By May 1918, the gravity of the situation is described in a telegram from Caldwell dated May 13, 1918: “Economic conditions deplorable, famine prevails over whole country with thousands dying every day. Spring crop is good and when gathered in about six weeks conditions should be ameliorated.”[39]

These deplorable conditions in the spring of 1918 are described in a dispatch from Caldwell. Despite the great work of the relief committees and the feeding of thousands of famine sufferers, Caldwell writes, “thousands, whom it was impossible to succor, have died of starvation and disease, especially in Teheran, Meshed, and Hamadan. Reliable information discloses that distress and hunger have been so appalling that hundreds of people have lived on grass, dead animals, and in some cases have even devoured human flesh… Widespread distress prevails also in the smaller cities and the thousands of Persian villages, but it is almost impossible to reach any of these places with the lack of assistance to be found, to say nothing of the difficulty of transporting food supplies to these remote mountainous and desert regions. The native Persians seem to have grown accustomed to seeing death in its worst form—starvation; and even the foreigners here are somewhat hardened to it on account of the abundant misery everywhere visible.” Caldwell provides insight on the magnitude of the death and suffering: “The normal death rate in Teheran is ten to fifteen persons per day but the latest reports of the local Sanitary Council state that the daily death rate in Teheran is now one hundred and eighty. This is an alarming figure considering that the best informed estimate the population of Teheran to be something less than two hundred thousand persons.” As an indication of the scarcity of bread, Caldwell writes: “Bread is the principal if not the sole article of food for the poor, and the normal price is about

three cents per pound, but at the present time the price is between thirty five and forty cents per pound, and is so scarce as to be hardly procurable at even that price." In addition to the scarcity of food, Caldwell adds: "An epidemic of typhoid and typhus, and some cholera, has been raging in different places in Persia for some time past."[40] Abol-Hassan Amidi-Nouri, an attorney and future editor of the newspaper *Daad*, writes in his memoirs that during the famine of 1917-1918, bodies were scattered in the streets of Tehran. In addition, in the morgues corpses were stacked in big piles and were buried in mass graves. Where famine had left off, cholera and typhoid had taken over. The writer of the memoirs states that in his own house, three people died of cholera within a short period in the summer of 1918. He believes 30,000 died of cholera in Tehran in the summer of 1918.[41] Caldwell reports that death from cholera alone in Tehran was in excess of 200 per day: "Famine situation improving harvest outlook encouraging but cholera epidemic spreading deaths averaging over two hundred a day throughout different localities."[42]

In May 1918, the Tehran police had put out new and revised mortality figures, and as reported by Ain-ol-Saltaneh, these had been published in the Tehran newspapers, including the *Raad*. The Tehran police reported that during the year 1296 (March 21, 1917 to March 20, 1918), 186,000 persons had died of famine and disease in Tehran. Commenting on the report in the *Raad*, Ain-ol-Saltaneh remarks that the decline the population of Tehran was very noticeable. In Kashan, 30,000 had died, and in Qum, "most houses had been emptied of inhabitants and had been sealed up."[43] Other observers also commented on the fact that Tehran had been emptied of its population. It should be noted that famine and cholera had persisted well into the summer of 1918, easily raising the toll in Tehran to 250,000. As below described in chapter four, the population of Tehran in 1914 was reliably reported to be 500,000. In 1920, Caldwell reports the population of Tehran at 200,000. In pondering these numbers, one begins to understand the magnitude of the calamity.

## REPORTS BY WHITE AND SOUTHARD

In April 1918, Francis White the secretary of the American Legation had traveled from Baghdad to Tehran. Caldwell writes: "I have the honor to enclose herewith, as of possible interest to the Department, a memorandum

drawn up by the Secretary of Legation embodying certain information which came to his knowledge while traveling from Bagdad to Teheran." The memorandum contains much information on famine conditions and on military matters. White describes the famine conditions: "Naked children are met everywhere along the road, who are nothing more than skin and bones. Their legs could not measure more than three inches in circumference and their faces are drawn, haggard and wrinkled like those of old men and women of eighty. Everywhere there is want and the population is compelled to eat grass and alfalfa and even to pick the grain out of the dung on the roads to make bread. In Hamadan there have actually been several cases of persons eating human flesh and it is not uncommon to see children and dogs fighting over the dead carcass of some animal, or to gain possession of the refuse which is thrown into the streets." White describes the good work by the American missionaries: "At Hamadan the American missionaries are very active in carrying out relief measures and several thousand persons are fed or given work on road construction by them every day. It is hoped that after the spring harvest is in conditions will be very much ameliorated and that they will more nearly approach normal after the autumn harvest has been reaped."[44]

In a memorandum prepared for the American Relief Committee, dated December 24, 1918, Addison E. Southard, American consul on special assignment in Persia in the summer of 1918, provides interesting information on famine in Persia.[45] Shortly after White had passed through Kasr-i-Shirin on the Persia-Mesopotamia border, Southard on his way to Tehran had stopped at Kasr-i-Shirin to have his lunch. He describes what happened: "Going into Persia last June I saw many evidences of the severe famine of the winter of 1917-18. On the first day across the frontier, at Kasr-i-Shirin, our convoy of motor trucks stopped for the noon rest. I sat upon a truck to have my lunch, which consisted mainly of a tin of baked beans. I opened the tin and skimming off a spoonful of beans from the top, because they looked unfit to eat, threw them into the thick dust of the sandy road. I had not noticed the ravenous-looking villagers who had gathered around in the meantime, but when I threw the spoonful of beans into the dust there was a sudden rush as a dozen men and women, so weak that they could scarcely stand alone, threw themselves into the road in a wild scramble to get the bits of food which I had just thrown away. Each grabbed a handful of the sandy dust which might contain a bean, and crammed it

into his or her mouth. These same people crouched around the convoy begging for food, and watching wildly for every crumb that fell into the dust. Each empty food-tin thrown away would be wildly fought for, and the possessor would frantically thrust fingers and tongue into the tin to gather any morsel left. In their eagerness they would often, but with seeming indifference, lacerate their fingers or mouths on the sharp edges where the tin had been opened." He also adds: "I personally saw along the Persian roads natives dead and dying from starvation, some of whom are reported to have had relief-distributed money upon their persons, but which was useless to them because there was no food to buy. I also saw starving people eating animal-dung, and ravenously eating such scant blades of grass as had not yet been withered by the scorching summer sun. Other pitiful sights were moribund people lying along the road, their glassy-looking and unnaturally large eyes being eaten by flies and the terrible sun, and with leaves and grass protruding from their mouths because they were without strength to move or swallow."[46]

## OBSERVATIONS BY GENERAL DUNSTERVILLE

Information on the famine is also given by Major-General L.C. Dunsterville, the commander of the British forces that invaded Persia in the spring of 1918, the so-called "Dunsterforce". Describing his Journey to Enzeli in January 1918, Dunsterville, writes: "Up to this point signs of famine were numerous, and we not infrequently passed the corpse of some poor, weary, hungry fellow who had given up the struggles by the roadside."[47]

Elsewhere he writes: "Signs of the famine had greeted us at the very outset of our journey in January when we encountered the dead and dying on the road, and passed through half-ruined villages with their starving inhabitants. But as time went on conditions went from bad to worse, and it was obvious that the distress must increase until the reaping of the next harvest some six months hence."[48] The famine in Hamadan is described by Dunsterville: "The evidence of famine were terrible, and in a walk through the town one was confronted with the most awful sights. Nobody could endure such scenes if he were not endowed with the wonderful apathy of the Oriental: 'It is the will of God!' So the people die and no one makes any effort to help, and a dead body in the road lies unnoticed until an effort to

secure some sort of burial becomes unavoidable. I passed in a main thoroughfare the body of a boy about nine years of age who had evidently died during the day; he lay with his face buried in the mud, and the people passed by on either side as if he were merely any ordinary obstruction in the roadway."[49] He talks of the "extraordinary apathy" of the people of Hamadan, and reveals that out of a population of 50,000 at least 30% were on the verge of starvation, "and for a very large percentage death was inevitable." The wealthy of Hamadan, Dunsterville claims, had made large profits from selling grain [to the British], but were unwilling to help save their poorer brethren.[50] As described in chapter five, by this time the British were engaged in large-scale purchase of grain and other foodstuff throughout Persia. It did not occur to Dunsterville at this point that the food purchased by the British was at the expense of the starving Persians. Having decried the "apathy" of the people of Hamadan, he blithely discusses the quality of the food fed to the British soldiers and the construction of a new bakery for the purpose of supplying refined bread instead of the coarse Persian sangak. Fortunately for the British, the Russians had left behind equipment that could be used to produce white European bread.[51] Dunsterville describes a "sangak" episode in which he had bought a piece of bread for a starving boy in the bazaar in Hamadan. The act had resulted in a stampede by the starving onlookers in which the small boy was nearly trampled to death. Dunsterville comments: "'Beastly!' you may say. But why malign the beasts?"[52] On May 18, 1918, General Dunsterville had traveled from Qazvin to Hamadan. He describes a countryside that was carpeted with beautiful spring flowers and the corpses of the famine victims: "The most beautiful flowers were those on the top of the Sultan-Bulaq Pass, exactly in the spot where we found seven corpses of unfortunate victims of the famine. Such corpses strewed the road between Kasvin and Hamadan at intervals throughout its length."[53]

## FAMINE IN WESTERN IRAN: OBSERVATIONS BY MAJOR DONOHOE

Donohoe, a well-known war correspondent, had joined the British army, and was assigned in January 1918 as an intelligence officer to the "hush-hush force," the nickname given to Dunsterforce. He had crossed into Iran

on April 5, 1918. He describes his first observations: “On the other side of the frontier I had heard a good deal as to the appalling economic conditions of Persia, and of the shortage of food; but now, brought face to face with the terrible reality, I understood for the first time its full significance.” He describes the scenes: “Men and women, shriveled and huddled heaps of stricken humanity, lay dead in the public ways, their stiffened fingers still clutching a bunch of grass plucked from the roadside, or a few roots torn up from the fields with which they had sought to lessen the tortures of death and starvation. At other times, a gaunt, haggard figure, bearing some resemblance to a human being, would crawl on all fours across the roadway in front of the approaching car, and with signs rather than speech plead for a crust of bread… At Kasr-i-Shirin, where we made a short halt, we were soon surrounded by a starving multitude asking for food. One poor woman with a baby in her arms begged us to save her child.”[54]

Donohoe describes the arrival of the British force at Kirind, a village on the way, which was “inhabited by an elf-like people in whom months of semi-starvation had bred something of the sullen ferocity of a pack of famishing wolves. There was in their eyes the glint of the hunted wild animal. They fled at our approach—men, women, and children…”[55] He continues to describe what he saw: “It was desolation and ruin everywhere… So it was that on our further progress ragged and cringing peasants, all semblance of manhood driven out of them by hunger and oppression, would crawl forth into the light of the day from some dark hovel to beg, firstly for their lives, and secondly for a morsel of bread. We granted the one without question, but were not always able to comply with the second demand.”[56] At Harunabad, the inhabitants “were as hungry as any other of their class in Persia, and they crowded round the bivouac cookhouses snatching eagerly at any morsel of food that was thrown to them.”[57] On the stretch between Mahidast and Kermanshah, the following was seen: “On the banks of a stream by the roadside was a ‘hunger battalion’ resting. Its members, men and boys, were in a state of semi-nudity; their few garments hung in tattered rags about their wasted bodies, and all looked to be in the last stage of physical exhaustion from starvation. For some the end had clearly come. They were incapable of further effort, and lay waiting for a merciful death to cut their sufferings. Others there were who still clung despairingly to the enfeebled thread of life. They crouched on the ground, gnawing frantically at a handful of roots or coarse

herbs with which they sought to assuage the terrible pangs of unsatisfied hunger. A little apart from the main body was a small group crooning a mournful dirge; it was the funeral requiem of a man whom famine had killed. The body was being prepared for burial and, before committal to earth, was being washed in the stream which supplied a nearby village with drinking water… We divided some food amongst the sorely stricken survivors of the hunger battalion. It was all we could give. They were thankful, and one man said that he and five companions had originally started from Hamadan, where the people were dying by hundreds daily, in the hope of crossing the frontier to Khaniquin or Kizil Robat, at either of which places they might get work and food in the British Labour Corps. Of the six who had set out on this quest he was the only survivor."[58]

If the British were feeding the people of Hamadan, they were doing a very poor job, as indicated by Donohoe himself: "Meanwhile the hunger mortality in Hamadan was increasing. Bread, the chief, indeed the only, article of diet of the poor, was 14 krans a batman (roughly the equivalent of ten shillings for 7 lbs.), and the wheat combine saw to it that the price increased rather than decreased. On May 6th Mr. McDowell, the British Consul, officially computed that the daily deaths from starvation were two hundred. Hamadan was a city of horrors. The unburied victims of the famine—men, women, and children—were lying in the streets and in the fields adjoining British Headquarters. The Kashish [mullah] or priest of the Shi'ite mosque, who received a fee of about twopence for officiating at the funerals of those buried in forma pauperis, admitted that the daily internment-roll was one hundred and sixty during the first fortnight of May. The hunger-enfeebled survivors became herbivorous, eating the grass in the fields like so many animals. A short course of this diet proved as fatal as was the want of bread, for it invariably caused peritonitis and a lingering, agonizing death." He then describes instances of cannibalism: "But there was worse to come. The foodless people, driven crazy by their sufferings, now resorted to eating human flesh. Cannibalism was a crime hitherto unknown in Persia, and no punishment exists for it under Persian law. The offenders were chiefly women, and the victims children stolen from the door-steps of their homes, or snatched up haphazard in the bazaar purlieus. Mothers of young children were afraid to leave them while they went to beg for bread, lest in their absence they should be kidnapped and eaten. I never went into the Bazaar or through the narrow, ill-paved streets without a

feeling of sickly horror at the sight of the human misery revealed there. Children who were little better than human skeletons would crowd round to beg for bread or the wherewithal to purchase it, and in parting with a few coppers to them, one could not help shuddering and wondering if they, too, were destined, sooner or later, to find their way into the cooking-pot."[59] The police had arrested some of the offenders: "They arrested eight women, who confessed that they had kidnapped, killed, and eaten a number of children, pleading that hunger had driven them to these terrible crimes." Donohoe describes other cases: "On the following day, May 8th, a yet more horrifying case of cannibalism was discovered. Two women, mother and daughter, were caught red-handed. They had killed the daughter's eight-year-old child, and were cooking the body, when the police interrupted the preparations for this horrible feast. The half-cooked remains were removed in a basket, and an indignant crowd of well-fed Democrats followed the wretched offenders to the police station, threatening them with death. The next day the women were executed."[60] Other women were apprehended and executed for child murder.

## FAMINE IN AZERBAIJAN

In a telegram dated January 19, 1917, American consul in Tabriz, Gordon Paddock reports: "Relief committee desires me report number destitute Urumiah increasing and relief funds from other countries diminished. Further funds urgently needed."[61] In June 1917, Paddock reports: "Relief Committee reports 40,000 refugees, prices high, exchange low. 800 thousand dollars required next twelve months, funds exhausted and supplies should be bought summer."[62] By August 1917, Paddock reports that the number of refugees had increased and more money was needed: "Relief Committee requests report American Committee addition June cable 500,000 dollars needed new relief thirty thousand destitute Kurdish refugees returned Soudjboulak, seventy-five per cent widows, orphans. Azerbaijan crops failure, famine threatens, prices rising."[63] The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 9, 1917 (No. 3) reports that large numbers were dying of hunger in Tabriz and Urumia. The price of rice in Tabriz had reached the amazing level of 1,000 tomans per kharvar. Urumia had asked the government in Tehran for 10,000 kharvars of wheat to be given to those too poor to afford bread. In addition, the paper claims that as many as 30,000

bandits and outlaws were wrecking havoc on the defenseless people, and that the Russian army was assisting the outlaws. A letter from Saujbulak, Kurdestan, states that tens of thousands of people have been driven from their villages and homes, and have lived in the countryside and mountains like wild animals. They had with the approach of winter descended on the town. The writer adds that many were widows and orphans who had fled after their husbands and fathers had been killed (by the Russian army), and had lived in the countryside on grass and tree bark. They had now descended on the city where even the wealthy could not procure sufficient bread. Many of these terrified people died daily at the foot of the city walls or in the abandoned ruins where they had found shelter.

On February 20, 1918, Robert E. Speer, secretary to The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. had written to the State Department, at the suggestion of Colville Barclay of the British Embassy, giving excerpts from letters received from their missionaries in Iran. The letters are extremely informative. In a letter dated September 1, 1917, Reverend E.T. Allen writes from Urumia: “In response to the Governor’s plea I went to Soudjboulakh. It is an old touring district of mine for I first visited it in 1893. It is one of the largest Kurdish cities and an important center in which we have done considerable missionary work in the past. It is three days journey from Urumia by caravan.” The town had changed hands several times during the war: “Unfortunately, it came in the way of the war. The Kurds naturally took side with their brethren across the border in Turkey and thus with the Turks. In the early days of the war they went on their victorious march north through Tabriz, and around the lake through Urumia to Salmas. They retreated with the defeated Turks and the Russian Army swept through their cities and villages. Then came another falling back of the Russians and a return of the Turks. Four times the armies have come and gone through this district each in turn, whether Russian or Turk, leaving behind greater destruction. On the last return of the Russians heavy punishment came to the Kurds because of their traitorous conduct.” The writer then describes the destruction, death, and famine:

I found a desolate country. At the last advance of the Russians heavy fighting followed. A large section of the city of Soudjboulakh was destroyed and many surrounding villages. Several thousand persons were killed,

skeletons are still to be seen on the road sides. Those who were not killed fled with the Turks who had led them into the trap. Their flight, like that of the Syrians in 1915, was in winter. Heavy snows covered the mountains. Many died of exposure. It was to the Kurds very much like the same as the flight of the Christians from Urumia in the winter of 1914-1915, only it concerned more people, a larger district was destroyed, greater numbers of males were killed in battle, their exile continued over a longer period of time, and there was more justification for the punishment.

For some months now the remnants of those who fled have been returning. They did not find a warm welcome in Turkey and the heat of the Mosul plains was more than they could stand. In the winter as they fled many died from the cold; in Mosul when spring and summer came on many died from the heat. Bereaved and lonely, few in numbers compared with the hosts that fled, they return only to find their villages destroyed, all their possessions gone, and a country inhabited only by the army. How many thousands have returned it is difficult for me to judge. In going over the matter with the Governor of the city, with other men who might know, and with the Russian officers, it is estimated that there are now forty thousand facing hunger. Seven thousand of these have been tabulated in the villages near to the city of Soudjboulakh and whose villages I visited. The residents of the city itself are not in desperate need, but the refugees who have crowded the city and those who are trying to find shelter in the destroyed villages are now in danger of starving… The Caucasian Moslem Relief committee of Baku has sent men to investigate and they have gathered in the city about one hundred and fifty orphans and widows who were about to starve and are feeding them daily. Their money, which is in rubles, has finished, and they will probably discontinue work. The ruble is now the lowest it has been and its value is almost nil.[64]

Interestingly, the *Zaban-e- Azad* of September 9, 1917, quotes the governor of Saujbulak, Mokarram-ol-Molk, who states that there were 40,000 homeless and hungry persons in the town, mostly widows and orphans, many of whom were sick. The governor adds that even if they survive the coming weeks, it was unlikely that any will make it through the winter.

A letter from Mrs. Wilder P. Ellis, dated October 1, 1917, from Urumia, describes the burning of the bazaar in Urumia by the Russians and

the ominous prospects of an impending famine: “During the month of July [1917] great excitement was aroused in the city by an act of vandalism by some Russian soldiers. The ruble, whose value has been running down steadily, dropped almost to worthless value and a group of angry soldiers, overwrought by not being able to procure anything for their money, and by further aggravation from the merchants in the bazaars, started fires which resulted in the almost total destruction of the bazaar… To those of us who visited the smoking ruins it was a never to be forgotten sight.” The writer describes the impending catastrophe: “As the winter approaches the mob of starving people thickens in our city yard. The prospects for the coming winter is ominous. The price of grain increased steadily from harvest to harvest, being high in the beginning and reaching famine prices… Prices are now fifty per cent higher than this time last year. The cost of wheat now measured in dollars is from five to six dollars a bushel and it is certain to advance. Except as help shall come famine is the only prospect ahead of the refugees, Kurdish as well as Christian. And of many of the resident Christians and Moslems as well, who are not provided for except as helped by friends and neighbors.”[65] In a telegram dated October 9, 1917, from Reverend Ellis to the American Relief Committee in New York, the following is stated: “If what I saw today in Sunni Mosque Urumiah could be transplanted ten hours Madison Square every newspaper America ring with story most abject spectacle in world at war and millions for relief would follow straight away. Kurdish refugees from mountain villages, driven from ripening crops, living unsheltered on stones, indescribable rags, starvation sickness and filth, human beings in state of oriental street dogs with whom they compete for offal. Work already done by Americans for Armenians, Syrians and Kurds is national triumph but vastness of continuing need is overwhelming.”[66]

A letter dated October 26, 1917, from the Reverend Frederick N. Jessup from Tabriz contains the following: “Conditions here are bad and bid fair to get steadily worse. Already the bread problem is very serious and there are no rains so the prospects for sowing are bad. How the people are to get though the winter no one knows, for we fear things will be very bad long before spring. We get the same reports from Urumia and Soudjboulak: we hear there are some 40,000 Kurdish women and children in the most terrible want and already dying of starvation… Outside of the food situation the internal affairs of this region are bad. The political parties are resorting

to assassinations and every little while someone is murdered. Three prominent men have thus been killed in Tabriz in the last ten days. Of course you are informed of conditions north of us; they have their reflex influence on affairs here… The Persians are so bitterly pro-German that they cannot understand how America should be on the other side." Reverend Jessup's letter of October 31, 1917, from Tabriz contains valuable information. On the famine he writes: "The spirit of movement and unrest has been observable in the whole community. Conditions have been growing steadily worse as prices of everything have been steadily rising. The drought last winter and spring has meant a small wheat crop, while the export of cattle and foodstuffs to the north has gone on continuously… By September the price of wheat had more than doubled. Now it has nearly quadrupled. For weeks the bakers' shops have been besieged by crowds of hungry women fighting for their turn to buy and often compelled to go away hungry. As bread is the main food for the mass of the people, a bread famine means terrible suffering. The prospects are bad and we fear that before spring there will be great need for relief work in Tabriz and the surrounding country—not for refugees, but for the poor starving people of this whole region." The letter then describes the political situation: "At the same time the city has been gradually filling with revolutionaries and extreme radicals, and political parties and secret committees have been busy. A series of assassinations has been planned and is being carried out here, beginning in July with the murder of the former governor, and continuing up to the present with increasing severity, so that some nights several prominent men are killed. Though some of the murders take place in daytime and the assassins must be known, there is no government strong enough to check them. It is said that the victims are warned beforehand, but few seem able to escape. It is hard to discover just the motive for the assassinations, but it seems a mixture of revenge upon the reactionaries of 1908-9 and 1911, of terrorism for the wealthy who are charged with storing wheat instead of supplying the city's need, and of blackmail."[67]

In a dispatch dated January 21, 1918, Caldwell encloses a report from Tabriz by Consul Gordon Paddock, dated January 9, 1918, and a letter from Rev. W.A. Shedd, from Urumia, dated January 3, 1918. Paddock's report includes a description of the desperate condition of 30,000 Kurdish refugees in Souj-Bulak area of Azerbaijan: "As mentioned also, a member of our committee visited the Souj-Bulak region, where there are estimated to be

some thirty thousand utterly destitute Kurds, most of them women, children and old men, who have straggled back to their ruined homes since the cessation of Russian military operations there. This visit was in response to a letter addressed to me by the Persian Governor of Souj-Bulak describing the pitiful conditions of these people. It was found, however, that although we had at that time funds for the purpose, no provisions could be obtained in that district, which had been the scene of successive Russian and Turkish occupation, and finally had been devastated partially by the former for punitive reasons. As there is no present possibility of transporting provisions to that region from elsewhere, it is not probable that we shall be able to undertake relief measures there in the near future, if at all." Thus the fate of the poor refugees had been sealed.

In addition to Russian misdeeds, Paddock gives another reason for the exorbitant price of wheat and barley: hoarding. Describing the philanthropy by some of the wealthy residents of Tabriz, Paddock writes: "These latter are said to be actuated by a desire to gain merit in a future world, but it is probable that they are likewise inspired by the desirability of preventing possible famine riots, which would naturally be directed against them as village proprietors and possessors of stocks of provisions. This last-mentioned situation, indeed, accounts for much, if not most, of the actual suffering among the poor, for there is a considerable number of village owners who regardless of consequences are endeavoring to 'corner' the grain (wheat and barley) of this region, and are still holding out for higher prices." The other reason for the shortage was lack of rainfall: "The fact that for almost fifteen months there has been practically no rainfall in this district, and no promise of such until within the past few days, and a past harvest of only about two-thirds normal, has enabled these monopolists to advance the price of wheat from 20 to 140 tomans the khalvar (1000 pounds) and barley from 12 to 100 tomans per khalvar. A snowfall, with promise of more, within the last two days has caused a drop in price of wheat to 80 and barley to 60 tomans, and if conditions continue favorable there will be a further reduction in anticipation of spring crops." Paddock describes some of the measures taken to relieve the situation: "A committee of alimentation has been organized here with Mr. L. Molitor, Director of Persian Customs, and an able and honest official, in an advisory capacity. This committee has succeeded in inducing a number of the large village proprietors, notably one of the principal Persian mujtahids, to disgorge

wheat that they had been holding out, and have collected much of the government supplies from the neighboring districts by sending Persian cossacks after them. The result is that the bread question in the city, always the basis of serious riots among the natives, which threatened in the early winter to become grave, has somewhat improved. It is believed, therefore, that while there is doubtless a shortage of food and considerable suffering, the situation at Tabriz and the immediate vicinity is not nearly so desperate as in some other parts of Persia, and could not be described as a condition of famine. There are in this immediate neighborhood no refugees with the exception of a few families that found their way here some time ago from the region south-east of Souj-Bulak, and these have since disappeared from the town." Paddock also reveals that the American relief effort had received $1,075,000, "practically all of which has now been expended." He adds: "As there is no definite arrangement as to funds in the future, the committee here has to rely on the central committee in America for continuation of the work. No estimate can therefore be given of funds available hereafter."[68]

A report by the Reverend W.A. Shedd, chairman of Urumia Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, dated January 3, 1918, describes the conditions in Urumia: "The local population is very hard up and among them there will be increased suffering till harvest… A great difficulty here is the difficulty of finding any wheat or other grain to bring into the district. The regions north of us are fairly well off, but they never have a large surplus for export. Salduz on the south, which usually furnishes at least half the wheat that comes in from outside, is worse off than Urumia, and people are dying of starvation. Soujbulak and other regions to the south are a little better off than Sulduz, but they are also very short in food. The regions east of the lake export to Tabriz and their supply is short also. These difficulties have been greatly increased by the drain on the supplies by the Russian army and also by the way in which supplies have been taken by the army, which by frightening people has prevented food stuffs from coming to the market. If we had only the local population to consider, it would be much simpler; but we have also in Urumia, Salmas and Khoi, over 25,000 Christian refugees from Turkey and in the Urumia district 20,000 to 30,000 Kurds. The former are dependent in the main on charity and are of course out of their homes. The latter are partly in their own homes; but the large majority owing principally to disorders and the behavior of the Russian soldiers are refugees, though they are Persian subjects. These last are the

most needy class." Shedd also reveals that a tiny proportion of those in need were being helped: "The number receiving this aid is now about 1400 and is increasing."[69] There were regions of Azerbaijan that had not been touched by the famine. In May 1918, a British force had taken Zanjan in Azerbaijan. On the approach to Zanjan, Donohoe states: "we were passing through a country less ravaged by starvation than the regions close to Hamadan. Food was more plentiful, and the 'hunger battalion,' with its suffering members, was not to be seen in the Persian North-West."[70] In the village of Benik Suma, south of Tabriz, Donohoe reports, "Supplies were plentiful, and the hand of famine had not touched this secluded Persian hamlet, which nestled so cosily beneath the glorious foliage of oak and chestnut."[71]

In January 1919, Francis White reports that although conditions in Tehran had improved somewhat, the provinces were not so lucky: "Conditions in the provinces, however, are not so favorable. Bread costs two and a half times in Hamadan as in Teheran and in Azerbaijan prices are reported to be even higher. Attempts are being made to extend the food control as soon as possible to the provinces also. A representative of the controller expects to start for Hamadan in a very few days and it is hoped that in the course of the next few weeks profiteering may be successfully stopped there also." He describes the refugee situation in Hamadan: "Another great problem in Hamadan is the question of the refugees who evacuated their homes in Azerbaijan in the summer when the Turks invaded Urumia and the Salmas plain. They arrived in great numbers in Hamadan and the greater part of them were sent to Bakuba where the British Military Authorities established a large camp to keep them during the winter. A considerable number, however, remained in Hamadan or have arrived there since the others left and they now have to be kept for the winter or be repatriated. Attempts are being made to repatriate the men at least before spring in order that they may sow their crops in time for the next years harvest and so not lose a whole season."[72] It is abundantly clear that the famine in Azerbaijan had lasted until the summer of 1919. In a telegram dated January 31, 1919, White reports on the economic and political conditions in Azerbaijan: "Economic conditions Azerbaijan deplorable. Prices high, famine exists in Tabriz, also epidemic of virulent typhus. Relief committee has been organized with Paddock chairman. Repatriation of Urumiah refugees postponed until conditions are ameliorated."[73] On

February 22, 1919, White informs: “Persian Government is considering appropriating 300,000 tomans for relief in Azerbaijan.” He also informs: “American Relief Committee is supporting about 3000 at Hamadan and British over 40,000 at Bakuba. If they cannot be repatriated soon they will lose another seasons crops and will be a further charge on relief fund.”[74] On February 27th, White adds: “I have the honor to report that the Persian Government is now taking an active interest in ameliorating the dreadful conditions now existing in Azerbaijan and has decided to send supplies to that province to be distributed among the poor. I understand that about 750 kharvars of rice will be sent from Teheran to Tabriz and about 3,500 kharvars more from Mazandaran to relieve the immediate needs of the people and that supplies of seeds will also be distributed gratis among the farmers and supervisors will be appointed to see that they are duly planted. The Government is considering appropriating three hundred thousand tomans additional for distribution to the needy.”[75] On March 11, 1919, White informs: “Persian Government has sent 25,000 tomans and certain supplies for relief in Azerbaijan where situation remains unchanged.”[76]

By April 1919, while conditions in Tehran continued to improve, famine conditions continued in the provinces. On conditions in Tehran White writes: “Due to the good crops last harvest and the food control instituted in Teheran by the Persian Government under the direction of a Belgian official, bread is plentiful in the capital and reasonably cheap. The prices of other commodities, however, continue to be about ten times the normal price and the wages of a laborer are just sufficient to buy five eggs. Bread, however, forms the staple diet of the working classes and they are enabled to live reasonably well on the six pounds of bread which daily wages of three krans will buy.” In the provinces, famine continued: “Conditions in the provinces are not so favorable. In Hamadan prices are higher than in Teheran although they have dropped considerably during the last three months. The most serious conditions exist in Azerbaijan where prices are extremely high and where famine conditions exist. The Persian Government is contributing rice and wheat to help feed the poor and the American Persian Relief Commission is helping to feed about twenty-five thousand indigent persons daily in Tabriz alone. Virulent typhus is epidemic in Tabriz and effectually completes the ravages made by hunger and famine.”[77]

# FAMINE IN KHORASSAN

The *Nobahar* of August 2, 1917 (No. 20) writes that fully five months before the current situation, the people of Khorassan had foreseen the coming famine and had telegraphed the government of the impending crisis and had asked that the government to sell back its grain to the people. Despite the famine, food was continuously exported, speculators were hard at work, and there was no authority capable of dealing with the food crisis. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 14, 1917 (No. 5) reports on bread shortage in Mashhad, Khorassan. It reports that bakeries in Mashhad were closed, and that hungry and angry crowds gathered in the streets shouting slogans against the government. Fearing disorders, the Interior Ministry had asked the Finance Ministry to send grain in haste. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 9, 1917 (No. 16) contains a letter from Abdol-Hossein Khorassani who writes that the province is burning from famine, cholera and insecurity. Some of the inhabitants of Quchan who had taken refuge in the Shrine of Imam Reza, had poured kerosene and set themselves on fire.

The London publication, *Near East*, in its issue of April 12, 1918, contained a report from Mashhad, Khorassan, describing the conditions in November 1917. By April 1918, the Russian forces had withdrawn and all of eastern Iran was under British occupation, Mashhad having been occupied by the British in March 1918. In sending the article, Caldwell comments: “Though somewhat belated this article fairly describes conditions as they existed last fall and even at the present time in Persia, and it is hoped that the article may prove of interest. Similar and even worse conditions and higher prices have existed and still prevail in Teheran, Hamadan, Shiraz, Tabriz and other Persian cities.” The article entitled “Conditions in North-Eastern Persia,” dated November 28, 1917, had been “delayed in transmission.” It contains the following:

For more than a year and a half the Meshed district has had no rain or snow, and the drought is becoming very severe. The price of wheat has risen from a normal of about twelve tomans per kharver (650 lb.) to forty-five to fifty tomans. The poor people who received the same wages as they did before are paying about four times a normal price for bread. For them, extras such as tea, sugar, fruit, etc., are entirely out of the question as being beyond the

capacity of their purse. Thousands of them have not tasted any meat for months. All their money goes for bread, and a great many of them cannot get enough even of that. I am told on good authority that babies being left in the streets to be picked up by any one who will take them and care for them, and that about twenty-five such sound-lings have been taken to the hospital of the shrine of Imam Riza… The following incident I can vouch for. The carcass of an animal was thrown out into the open just outside one of the city gates. (The people do not always take the trouble to cart dead animals outside the city. They quite as often leave them in the street or in any other piece of open ground, and the street dogs do the rest.) As soon as this carcass was thrown out, people went running to the spot and began cutting off and carrying away chunks of the meat, while the dogs stood around wagging their tails patiently waiting to for their turn to finish up what was left… Among the villagers, upon whom the cities are dependent for food, the live stock is being greatly depleted for lack of fodder. Dry leaves off the trees are selling for four tomans a kharver, whereas two tomans used to be about a normal price for kharver of good straw. Animals are dying, and others are being killed, because there is nothing to feed them on. A sheep with her lamb at her side is selling for eleven krans, whereas the lamb alone used to sell for fifteen krans. This does not run up the price of meat at present but it will later on. But every camel, horse, mule or donkey that dies or is killed does help to increase at once the price of every kind of farm produce and every article of every kind that has to be transported, because there is no transport except by animals.

In the final paragraph of the article, the following is found: “Business is at a very low ebb. Prices are very high. Pounds sterling are selling at thirty krans or less, as compared with fifty five before the war. Russian roubles are selling at eight shahies, compared with one hundred and sixteen shahies before the war. Imports from Russia are practically stopped… I suppose great Governments do not usually engage in philanthropy, and yet we do hear of their occasionally doing so in war time. If only the English would promote an enterprise in some form to facilitate the transport of merchandise from India into Khorasan and right up to Meshed, it would not only be philanthropy, but should yield large money profits.”[78] The writer asks the obvious question: why did the British government not bring in food

from India? In a subsequent report by Southard it is made clear that ample grain was available in India at very low prices. Southard also reveals that ample grain was available in Mesopotamia just across from Kermanshah where many people were dying from famine every day. Why was it that while both India and Mesopotamia had ample grain, Iran located between the two regions was starving? It turns out not only the British were not bringing any food into Khorassan, they were engaged in large-scale purchases of foodstuff for the purpose of feeding their armies in Iran and Russia. A letter from E. A. Douglas of the American Hospital in Tehran to Caldwell, dated January 15, 1918, contains the following on conditions in Mashhad: "Rev. L. F. Esseltyn, Meshed, writing on Dec. 21st states 'Famine conditions are developing here and growing more severe every day. Wheat is now sixty five tomans per 650 pounds.' Writing again on January 3rd he says 'The poor people here are suffering terribly for food. We are feeding a few of them every noon from money given by friends for that work.'"[79]

## FAMINE IN ISFAHAN AND FARS

The famine in Isfahan is described by S.J. Crestian, an English resident of Isfahan, in a letter dated April 24, 1918, to a relative in England: "I feel sorry to write concerning the situation in Isfahan; the cost of living is something terrible. Every day masses of Persians die from starvation. When we go out in the morning, we see corpses lying here and there in the streets. A large number of Persians grind bones and eat them or feed on dead animals and die. But until now no Armenian has been starving; their relatives in India support them with money forwardings. If this famine continues for a few months more, there is no doubt that the Armenians themselves will not survive. A kharvar (50 liters) of corn (wheat) costs 200 tumans, formerly it did not cost more than 15 tumans; a liter of butter which before the war cost 15 krans is now sold 7 tumans, a liter of meat, formerly 8 krans, now costs 32 krans."[80]

The famine and the associated diseases in the southern province of Fars had extracted a dreadful toll. The terrible toll in the city of Shiraz is described by an eyewitness, Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh who gives the following account: "The world war was just about over [fall 1918] when in the midst of one terrible dark night three terrifying horsemen each wielding

a sword and a whip silently passed through the city limits and entered the city. One rider was named ‘famine,’ another was named ‘Spanish flu,’ and the last was named ‘cholera.’ The poorer classes, old and young, succumbed and fell like autumn leaves in front of the assault by these pitiless riders. As no food was to be found, people were forced to eat whatever that could be chewed—objects or animals. Soon not a single cat or dog or crow was to be seen. Even mice and rats were exterminated. Leaves, grass, and plant roots were traded like bread and meat. At every corner and spot unclaimed dead bodies were scattered. After a while the people began to eat the flesh of the human dead. Periodically the bodies were stacked and loaded onto carts and taken outside of the city where they were dumped into ditches and covered with soil. The bazaars and the stores were empty and closed and no doctors, nurses or medication could be found.”[81]

Jamalzadeh’s account is backed by Sykes who indicates that in just one month, October 1918, one-fifth of the population of Shiraz had been wiped out. He provides the following account: “The fight with the Kashgais had hardly been won when victors and vanquished alike were prostrated by the awful 1918 scourge of influenza, which in Fars assumed its most virulent form. At first we did not realize that the disease was destined to slay one-fifth of the population, striking down the troops in Shiraz and at Firuzabad with equal severity.” He describes the death toll: “Shiraz lost 10,000 out of its 50,000 inhabitants. Hideous to relate, the Persian authorities made a ‘corner’ in shrouds, and we were too busy looking after our own men to do anything for the townspeople, who, in despair, crawled by hundreds to die in the mosques. Our losses were heartbreaking, more than six hundred British and Indians falling victims to the pandemic scourge, the most terrible on record. Farman Farma just pulled through, and when we visited him after his recovery he explained in his curious French that half Shiraz was dead. He put it, ‘Le demi-monde de Chiraz est mort.’”[82] Having stated the above, on the very next page Sykes contradicts himself, stating that the flu strain among the British troops was different from that of the local population and that the British mortality rate was a mere two per cent: “The terrible influenza epidemic broke out at the beginning of October, but the type was mild and the mortality among the troops was only 2 per cent as against 18 per cent at Shiraz; at the same time all the men who were attacked were left very weak, and were unfit for hard work until they had fully recovered. The mortality in the surrounding district was much higher,

and lessened the chance of any serious opposition."[83] Coincidentally, another spot in Iran where the flu had been particularly vicious was at Qazvin which in October 1918 was the headquarters of the British Norperforce.

It is abundantly clear that Sykes' "explanation" for the much lower mortality rate among the British troops—that the flu strain afflicting the British was a different "strain" from that afflicting the Persians (in other words the flu virus engaged in discrimination)—is absurd. The real reason for the higher Persian mortality was that the victims had been weakened by the famine, whereas the British troops were well-fed. Thus the Persians succumbed easily because of the famine. The 10,000 victims of the "influenza" were really victims of the famine. Thus if one-fifth of the population of Fars was wiped out in just one month, it is not surprising that nearly one-half of Persia's population fell to the famine during 1917-1919. In addition, the case of the famine in Fars is particularly important because it could not be claimed that it had been caused by the Russians and the Turks. While southwest Persia had been under British military occupation since November of 1914, Fars was occupied from early 1916. No Russian or Turkish forces were present in south Persia. It was all British.

## "SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN PERSIA"

On October 15, 1918, Captain Frank Frayser, the representative of the Military Intelligence Division located at the Postal Censorship Station in Seattle, Washington, had written to the Director of Military Intelligence. His letter reads: "I transmit, herewith, copy of Summary made by Mr. C.C. Batchelder, War Trade Board Representative on the Censorship Committee here, of the present situation in Persia, compiled from letters passing through the censorship stations of San Francisco and Seattle, which will be found of interest at Headquarters." The report is entitled "Summary of the Present Situation in Persia Derived from Letters intercepted in the San Francisco & Seattle Censorships." This long and interesting report follows.

"The letters which have been intercepted show that anti-English feeling is intensely strong, and that German propaganda has been extremely successful. The northern part of Persia is very largely pro-German, and it is said that some of the people are ready to take part in the war, if supplies and leaders are furnished them. Certain portions of Afghanistan sympathize

with Germany, and the Tartars and some of the inhabitants of Turkestan are loyal to Turkey and Germany. One of the correspondents states that the Germans could mobilize at least one million men in the Caucasus and Northern Persia. While these men are not especially good fighters, they could greatly embarrass the British in Southern Persia and Mesopotamia. The Mohammedan races in this region are getting the idea that German arms are invincible, owing to the activity of German agents among them.

"The present economic conditions in Persia seem to resemble those existing in Russia, in spite of the fact that only the northwestern portions of the country have been in the path of contending forces. Much of the country is arid and mountainous, and the rain-fall is scanty and uncertain in large districts, so that the primitive methods of cultivation in use do not produce a very large surplus of food over the actual daily needs of the population. The roads are poor and the means of transportation are very inadequate, so it often happens that there is actual famine in certain portions of the country, while there is comparative abundance in other places. Thus the whole country is always liable to be plunged into misery whenever the customary processes of daily life are interfered with to a great extent.

"During the last two years the rain-fall has been very deficient, and the crops have consequently been very poor. In addition, the Turkish, Russian, and English armies have required large amounts of food for the men and forage for the animals, and in some districts there has been considerable looting of property and destruction of the food supplies. The war has practically stopped imports from Russia via the Caspian Sea, and from Europe and India via the Persian Gulf, so the prices of all imported articles have advanced very much. The situation has been made much worse by the action of the wealthy land owners and traders who, not only kept their own crops out of the market, but also bought and stored all the grain they could lay hands on. As usually happens in such cases, many of the poorer people were tempted by the high prices offered, and sold all their surplus grain, with the result that they were left practically destitute after a few months. Similar conditions often prevail in other misgoverned Oriental countries. In some districts there is abundant food in the cities, but the lower classes are starving, because they have no money to buy it. There is but little prospect of improvement in the situation until the harvest time. There is also much disease, and typhoid is epidemic. Typhus and cholera are also prevalent.

“The descriptions of actual conditions are heart rending. Men, women and children are dying of absolute starvation, and the survivors are like living skeletons. People eat slaughter house offals and dirt to fill up their stomachs. The villages in some regions have been utterly destroyed by the various armies passing through, so that the people are not only hungry but without shelter also. The unsettlement of trade has practically ruined the native industries, and carpet making and silk weaving have stopped, throwing thousands out of employment. The workmen, who are never able to save, are therefore reduced to beggary. ‘A very large number of formerly self-supporting artisans, laborers, shopkeepers and servants are now out of work. Thousands of families have already sold everything saleable in order to get bread, and are now destitute, and this condition is increasing daily. Even if this next harvest should be abundant, destitution would still continue until other economic conditions recover, and many thousands of families will have no money to buy bread, even though it should become ridiculously cheap.’ No. 1584.

“The cities and towns are filled with people from the mountains and villages who flock in, hoping to find food and shelter, and as they have no place to go, and no money to buy food, die of hunger in the streets. People are eating the bodies of dead animals which have died of starvation… One of the native officials has evidently been appointed Food Controller, in imitation of other countries, but he has not accomplished much judging from the following extracts: ‘An awful story, the truth of which is vouched for by one of our Persian friends, is as follows: A portion of a child’s body was found in a Persian home in a village not far from Hamadan. Investigation revealed that the man had killed the child for food. He was taken out and stoned to death. As we walk the streets, the beggars catch at our coats, seize our hands, and fall to the ground and kiss our feet, imploring for help. As we return to our homes their cries ring in our ears for hours.’ ‘Not that I suppose there is any sense of shame for those conditions to be found in the food controller, and I am not writing this to make him ashamed, but for the sake of making the truth known.’ No. 1585.

“The assistant chief of police of the Persian Empire, states that two-thirds of the people of Teheran are practically starving, and dead people are lying unburied in the streets unheeded. The British officers and men say they have never seen anything like the terrible conditions by the roadsides. Persons who have spent years in China and India and have seen famines

there, say that nothing they have seen in those countries has approached the present conditions in Persia. The Government proved itself entirely unable to cope with the situation, and the Cabinet has changed three or four times in the last five months, without improving the situation. 'One of our church members came running in a few days ago crying, "Oh, give me a little money, a woman has abandoned her child in the street saying she cannot feed it and another child is holding on to her veil crying bitterly and saying, Oh, don't leave little sister, don't leave little sister."' No. 1584."[84]

## THE FAMINE CONTINUES

The famine had continued unabated during the summer and fall of 1918, despite one of the best harvests on record. In a dispatch dated June 22, 1918, Caldwell reports on the price of necessities at harvest time. Wheat was priced $12-15 per bushel, barley was $7-9 per bushel, and rice was 55 cents per pound, and sugar was $1.80 per pound, and charcoal sold for $140 per ton. These prices, in the opinion of Caldwell were indicative of "the difficulties of the food and famine situation prevailing at harvest time in Persia." He then searches for the reasons for these high prices: "The paradoxical situation of the Persian poor starving in the midst of plenty needs this explanation: aside from the supplies taken by foreign troops in Persia, the 1917 crop would probably have sufficed to feed the population, but, owing to a lack of strong Government, in fact, of almost any government at all, the limited crop of wheat and barley, which articles constitute the only food for the poor, was stored and hoarded until prices rose to fabulous figures. In the meantime, thousands were dying and even now, though the Persian harvests are abundant, in reality the best in years, at harvest time wheat is selling at from twelve to fifteen dollars per bushel and barley a little more than half the same price, and most other necessities are being sold at proportionate prices." Caldwell then points out another important factor: "in addition to the lack of control by the government the lack of transportation facilities, so many of the pack animals having died of starvation during the past winter, is largely responsible for the prohibitive prices prevailing for Persia and local products, while the lack of any opportunity to import necessities and food-stuffs from other countries accounts for the extraordinary price of foreign products."[85]

Still by July 1918, the situation in Tehran was bad. Caldwell telegraphs: “On account of riots and scourges occasioned by food shortage and political disturbers Teheran has been placed under military government.”[86] The famine, of course, had been accompanied by disease and epidemics. The situation in Qazvin is reported by Caldwell: “Paddock reports epidemic of influenza at Kasbin and more than half of inhabitants incapacitated.”[87] Famine conditions continued rampant in the fall of 1918. Caldwell reports: “Last year was one of the hardest that Persia has ever passed through, hundreds dying daily in all the large cities of famine. In the spring, fortunately, one of the largest crops on record was harvested and prices of bread and foodstuffs decreased greatly. Unfortunately the Government is unable or more probably unwilling to stop the hoarding of grain by the rich land owners and prices are therefore artificially held at a level far higher than conditions warrant. In the last few weeks a Belgian has been appointed food controller and it now remains to be seen whether the Government will give him proper and sufficient support to effectively regulate prices and compel owners of grain to sell it at a reasonable price. If he is properly supported he should be at least able to keep prices from rising above their already very high level and, in another year, to make a considerable reduction in the cost of the most staple foods. If he is unable to keep prices from rising it is greatly to be feared that the appalling famine conditions with their attendant starvation and suffering which existed last year will be repeated again this year.”[88]

The *Iran* of September 13, 1918, reports on the appointment of a food controller: “Monsieur L. Molitor, a Belgian in the Government service who has lately come to Teheran from Tabriz has been appointed to take the responsibility of food control… He has been charged with the responsibility of the management of the department of Royal Lands, government wheat storage, public food and bakers department, and these departments have been informed that they are now under his direction.” The paper concludes: “We hope we shall soon notice the results of his measures in the regulation of the bakers’ affairs.” One of the measures taken by M. Molitor was the lashing of the hapless Kerbalai Hossein, a “wicked” Tehran baker. The *Iran* of September 20, 1918, reports on the affair: “Kerbalai Hossein, who is one of the chief bakers and who has unlawfully made much money while holding his position and whose name has often been noticed in the list of the most wicked bakers, has been pursuing his former schemes during the

last few days, while M. Molitor, the newly appointed food controller, has been seriously investigating the work of the bakers. Lately it was discovered by the food department that he has been storing away a part of the wheat which the Government has sent to his shop for present use. He was therefore arrested the evening of the day before yesterday and taken to the police station where he was tied to a tripod and given 100 lashes. The serious attention given by the Food Controller to the punishing of a number of the thieves of the Bakers' Department, who are content to help starve hundreds of innocent people, is really appreciated and we hope he will pursue the same policy with the others as he has with Kerbalia Hossein." The shortage and high price of wheat, the lashing of Kerbalai Hossein notwithstanding, is reported in the *Iran* of September 15, 1918, which describes the seizure of the wheat and the high prices: "During the last few days great quantities of wheat have been brought into Teheran. In accordance with the preliminary directions given by the Food Controller the wheat is being held by the Government and after the owner has been informed, a part of the wheat is returned to the owner, who must secure permission before taking it, and the price of the part kept by the Government has been paid to the owner, counting wheat at forty-five to fifty tomans per kharvar, or from seven to ten dollars per bushel."[89]

## IMPROVING CONDITIONS IN TEHRAN, SPRING 1919

In a report dated October 7, 1918, American consul Ralph H. Bader also describes the appointment of Lambert Molitor, a Belgian subject, as food comptroller for Tehran and district, "upon whom has been conferred full power to deal with the food situation." Bader also describes the government attempt to refill its granaries: "An effort is being made to fill the government granaries, and to that end an order has been issued requiring half of all the grain brought into Teheran to be turned over to the food comptroller at the current market price. Grain is being bought as rapidly as possible in the provinces, and those farmers who do not sell to the government will forfeit 10% of their grain each months." Bader then notes the end of the famine in Tehran: "A supply of flour is delivered to bakers daily and the price of bread has been fixed at 3 krans (kran = .179) per man (6 1/2 lbs.). The normal price of bread is 1.1 krans per man. The yield of grain being good this year, it is believed that with proper and timely

governmental control the price of bread will be kept at the price named and a repetition of the deplorable food situation of the past year will be avoided."[90]

In Quarterly Report No. 2, dated January 10, 1919, White indicates that conditions in Tehran were improving: "Economic conditions in the capital have been much improved during the last quarter due, in a great measure, to the appointment of a Belgian as food controller. The price of bread (Sangak), which is now plentiful, has been fixed at three krans a maun, which is low enough to allow the poor to buy sufficient for their needs. There were intrigues against the food controller at first on the part of the rich land owners who wanted to hoard their grain to get the same famine prices which they received for it last year. The intrigues failed however, due to the firm attitude of the cabinet. The Shah sold his grain to the food controller at a very moderate price and his example was of great assistance in making the food control a success. The American Persian relief Commission was also of immense assistance in the matter."[91] In Quarterly report number 4 of July 7, 1919, White reports that the famine is finally over with the harvest of 1919: "The harvest which is just being brought in is reported to be one of the best in years, and it, coupled with the excellent crops last year, has removed all chances of a repetition in the near future of the famine conditions of eighteen months ago. The situation is so favorable in Teheran that the food control has been able to remove all restrictions on the sale of barley and is no longer obliged to transport wheat from Araq, there now being enough in the Teheran district to satisfy the needs of the city, thus liberating large quantities of wheat for Kum and other cities within a like radius of Sultanabad, and also saving many thousands of tomans for the Government in transport charges… The price of bread in Teheran has been reduced to 2.60 krans a maun from three krans, the price which has been maintained by the food control since last autumn. Persia has not yet recovered from the loss of the greater part of her transport animals during the famine a year and a half ago and until this is remedied her recovery to normal conditions will necessarily be slow."[92] In Quarterly Report No. 5 of October 1, 1919, Caldwell writes: "Economic conditions in Persia have not changed much since last quarter. The crops in most districts have been good and prices of native foodstuffs are in some instances slightly lower." Remarkably, the famine in Azerbaijan had lasted until the end of 1919, and Caldwell informs in the same report on the persistence of

the scourge in that province: "Outside the province of Azerbaijan, where the Armenians and Assyrians, especially those who are refugees, suffered greatly and where the land has in great measure remained uncultivated during the last few years, there is, so far as is known, no general destitution in Persia, and it is believed that the people will be able to get through the winter as well as usual."[93] In Quarterly Report No. 6 of January 9, 1920, Caldwell writes: "Prices for commodities here have not gone up recently. All wheat is still controlled by the Government, the price being about four dollars a bushel (counting exchange). There have been plenty of rain and snow so far and good crops of wheat and barley are anticipated at the coming harvest. This serves to keep the present prices down."[94]

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4. Caffery, dispatch 236, 891.5017/4, October 9, 1916.
5. Caffery, dispatch 246, 891.5017/5, October 17, 1916.
6. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, Qahraman Mirza Salur. *Diaries of Ain-ol-Saltaneh, in 10 volumes*, ed. Massoud Salur and Iraj Afshar. Tehran, Asatir, 1998. Vol. 6, pp. 4771-72. Cited in Hossein Abadian, *From World War I to the 3rd of Esfand Coup, 1914-1921, 2nd Edition*. Tehran, Political Studies and Research Institute, 2012, p. 172.
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11. Caldwell, dispatch, 891.00/920, October 4, 1917.
12. Caldwell to William Phillips, letter and enclosure, 123 C 122/52, September 24, 1917.
13. Caldwell, dispatch 330, 891.48/31, October 4, 1917.
14. Caldwell, telegram, 891.00/918, October 22, 1917.

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20. Caldwell, telegram, 891.48/30, December 10, 1917.

21. Caldwell, dispatch, 353 and enclosures, 891.48/59, January 15, 1918.

22. Caldwell, dispatch 353 and enclosures, 891.48/59, January 15, 1918.

23. Caldwell, telegram, 891.48/33, January 22, 1918.

24. Caldwell, telegram, 763.72111/6874, February 1, 1918.

25. Caldwell, press dispatch, 891.00/1001 1/2, February 27, 1918.

26. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered) and enclosures, 891.00/962, February 2, 1918.

27. Charles Vickery to Secretary of State, letter and enclosure, 891.48/36, February 19, 1918.

28. *Diaries of Seyed Mohammad Kamareh-i*, ed. Mohammad Javad Moradi-Nia, Tehran, Shirzadeh, 2003, pp. 68-77, cited in Abadian, p. 178.

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33. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, vol. 7, p. 5195, cited in Abadian, p. 222.

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38. Caldwell, telegram, 891.48/51, May 25, 1918.

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62. Paddock, telegram, 891.48/26, June 20, 1917.

63. Paddock, telegram, 891.48/27, August 2, 1917.

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65. Speer to Secretary of State, letter, 891.00/927, February 20, 1918.

66. Smith, telegram, 891.48/28, October 9, 1917.

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73. White, telegram 98, 891.00/1074, January 31, 1919.

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93. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 5, 891.00/1147, October 1, 1919.

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*Chapter Four*

# A Veritable Holocaust: The Decline in the Population of Iran

To estimate the famine's toll, this chapter will compare Iran's pre and post-famine population. Iran's first population census was conducted in 1956, 35 years after the advent of the Pahlavi regime. In the absence of census figures for the earlier years, one has to rely on estimates of contemporaries, foreign and Iranian, diplomatic reports, and on the very small number of scholarly articles that have attempted to estimate the population of the country during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This chapter will first review and critique these more recent studies and will point out that some of the key demographic developments described, namely, the increase in urbanization and the increase in emigration to neighboring countries and beyond, are completely inconsistent with the hypothesis of a more or less stationary population, and that population of Iran in 1910 was much higher than implied by these studies. It is indeed remarkable that these results have gone unchallenged for so long. The chapter will then utilize population figures found in State Department records and American sources to estimate Iran's loss due to famine and disease in World War I. The results indicate that conservatively 8-10 million Iranians, and possibly more, perished during the famine. The famine of 1917-1919 was probably the greatest calamity in the history of Iran and possibly the biggest holocaust of the twentieth century. That it has remained concealed for nearly a century leads one to suspect that there are other hidden calamities awaiting discovery.

## A REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY ARTICLES ON THE POPULATION OF IRAN

In his 1968 article, Julian Bharier uses "backward projection" to estimate of Iran's population during 1900-1966. He first presents two population estimates for the period 1900-1966.[1] The first estimate is that of Mehdi Amani, professor of demography at Tehran University, as calculated by the method of "backward retrogression." The starting point is the population census of 1956 (18.97 million). For the period 1900-1956, three distinct periods with different annual population growth rates are assumed: 1900-1925 (0.2%), 1926-1945 (1.5%), and 1946-1956 (2.5%). Using the 1956 population census figure as the base and applying the various growth rates to the different periods, Amani's estimate for 1911 is 10.94 million. The other estimate presented by Bharier is the "perpetual inventory of population," calculated from the estimated number of births in five year periods, assuming a life expectancy of 30 years. According to this method, the 1911 population is estimated at 12.19 million. Seemingly rejecting Amani's findings and the latter result, Bharier then presents his own estimates which he claims "to be the nearest one can get to the truth." His estimate for 1900 is 9.86 million; that of 1910 is 10.66 million; that of 1914 is 10.89, and that of 1919 is 11.10 million. He employs the "backward projection method," but he uses the "adjusted" figure for the 1956 census (20.38 million) and his own assumed growth rates for the various periods. For instance, he assumes that the population growth rate for 1900-1919 was 0.75% per year, which he claims "is acceptable on both historical and demographic grounds." The main justification is that it was given by "the widely-travelled Schindler for the years 1875-1910," and subsequently used in a confidential 1919 Foreign Office "handbook" on Iran. Using a similar methodology, not surprisingly, Charles Issawi also concluded that Iran's population in 1910 was about 10 million.[2]

However, it is very remarkable and revealing that in the estimation of the population of Iran by Julian Bharier, in his claim, "the nearest one can get to the truth," there is no reference whatsoever to the Great Famine of 1917-1919. Not even a mention: the author seems to be completely unaware of this event. It is also very clear that the Foreign Office 1919 "handbook" on Iran contains nothing on the Great Famine. If it did, it would have been assuredly reflected in Bharier's deliberations. According to the American Chargé d'Affaires, Wallace Smith Murray, this famine had claimed one-third of Iran's population. A famine that even according to such British sources as General Dunsterville, Major Donohoe, and General Sykes, had

claimed vast numbers of Iranians. Yet the confidential "handbook" apparently contains nothing on the subject. Similarly, a March 1, 1922, highly confidential memorandum on Iran from Lord George N. Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, to the U.S. Secretary of State, Charles E. Hughes —a most remarkable document in which the American Government is warned in no uncertain terms that "Persia is a British interest of the highest importance"—is devoid of any reference to the famine.[3] Bharier's omission and failure to refer to the Great Famine of 1917-1919 alone is sufficient grounds for dismissing his scientific-appearing estimates of the population of Iran for 1900-1918. However, his estimates for subsequent years are useful and similar to the figures given by the American Legation. For instance, Bharier's figure for Iran's population in 1919 is 11 million, while that of Caldwell and Sykes is 10 million.[4] Bharier's figure for 1930 is 12.5 million as compared to 13 million given by Charles C. Hart, the American Minister; Bharier's 1941 figure is 14.8 million which is nearly the same as 15 million given by Louis G. Dreyfus, Jr., the American Minister.

Bharier's results are used by Gad G. Gilbar in his 1976 article on demographic developments during the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the twentieth century.[5] For the 1850-1860 period, Gilbar uses the population figures given by H.C. Rawlinson, and for the subsequent decades he uses the figures given by Sir Albert Houtum-Schindler. Gilbar's justification for dismissing the figures given by the other contemporary observers is that only Rawlinson and Houtum-Schindler, because of their long years of residence in the country, were qualified and competent to estimate the population of Iran. In addition, Gilbar notes that Houtum-Schindler's population figure of 9.00-9.25 million for 1900 is consistent with Bharier's figure of 9.86 for 1900, obtained by "retrogressive calculation." Using these sources, Gilbar concludes that during the second half of the 19th century (1850-1900), Iran had zero population growth. To quote (p. 144): "In 1850 the population of Persia would have numbered 9 to 10 million people. In the 1850's and 1860's the population growth would have been limited because of the occurrence of periods of severe famine and cholera, and by 1868 it would probably have been no more than 9.5 to 10 million people. Of these, only 8 to 8.5 million would have survived in 1873, after the years of the great famine. For the next twenty-five years, until the late 1890's, the population would have grown steadily at an

average rate of 0.5 to 1.0 per cent, and by the turn of the century the population would have been about 10 million." Gilbar's underestimation of the population of Tehran, it should be pointed out, is indicative of his underestimation of the population of Iran. The 1908 population of Tehran he gives at 280,000. As below described, on the basis of the daily consumption of bread in Tehran in 1910, its population was estimated to be 350,000-400,000. By 1914, its population was reported at 500,000 by Iranian newspapers and other Persian sources, and was substantiated by the 1917 election results to the Majlis. Moreover, both Houtum-Schindler and the Russian geographer-statistician, L.A. Sobotsinskii, state that the population of Iran in 1910 was 10 million.[6] In other words, the population in 1910 was the same as in 1850, and Iran's population had not grown in sixty years: while the population of the world expanded from 1.2 billion to 1.7 billion in this period, that of Iran was unchanged.

One can identify at least two notable demographic developments in this period that are inconsistent with the hypothesis of zero population growth: increased urbanization and increased emigration to neighboring countries, especially, Russia. Gilbar estimates that the urban population of Iran increased from 850,000 (8-9% of total) in 1870 to 1.8 million (18% of the total) in 1900, and the population of Tehran increased from 70,000 in 1870 to 250,000 in 1900. There is ample evidence that Iran's urban population had grown to at least 2.5 million by 1910. In his 1913 article, part of which was reprinted in Issawi, Sobotsinskii discusses urbanization and its determinants in Iran. In 1910, three cities were 100,000 or more: Tehran 350,000, Tabriz 300,000, and Isfahan 100,000 (Gilbar). That is three largest cities had a combined population of 750,000. In addition, there were numerous towns between 50,000 and 100,000, including Mashhad, Hamadan, Shiraz, Urumia, Qazvin, Kermanshah, Kerman, Yazd, Kashan and Khoy. These had a combined population of some 600,000. Conservatively, the largest twelve cities had a population of 1.3 million. As noted by Issawi, "Travelers' accounts abound in material showing that the streets and bazaars of Iranian towns, especially the large commercial centers, were overcrowded with poor and unemployed persons, ready to sell their labor for a piece of bread."[7] Clearly, there was considerable rural-urban migration. In addition, one can list more than 60 towns between 10,000 and 50,000, with a combined population of at least 1.2 million.[8] We also know that some of the so-called villages in Sobotsinskii's account were

really towns of 10,000 people or more. One was the "village" of Taft. Sobotsinskii elaborates: "Most villages consist of a few houses, though at times one finds a large village, such as Taft (near Yazd) where some 10,000 persons of both sexes live."

Given Iran's level of development, it is impossible to reconcile an urban population of at least 2.5 million with the estimates by Houtum-Schindler, Bharier and Gilbar that the 1910 population of 10 million because it would imply an urban population ratio of 25%. Sobotsinskii writes: "In Persia there are no factories which being concentrated in towns, could provide earnings to the incoming population and cause the gathering of the inhabitants in the towns; in addition, Persian towns do not offer, as regards services and amenities, any advantages over village life. Nor is there in Persia that powerful factor of growth of European towns, credit banks advancing loans on urban real estate. Last, for Persia the time has not yet come when the production of food requires a smaller percentage of the labor force in the villages, thanks to the introduction of various kinds of improvements. Thus, at a time when in several countries a quarter of the population is concentrated in towns, in Persia the urban population does not exceed 12 percent of the total."[9] Applying the urban population ratio of 12 percent to an urban population of 2.5 million, we obtain a population figure of 20 million, which, interestingly, is the figure given in two 1914 reports by the American Minister to Iran given below.

The other demographic development that undermines the claim of zero population growth during 1850-1910 was the explosive growth of emigration from Iran to the neighboring countries, especially to southern Russia during 1890-1914. As pointed out by Issawi, "The statistics on migration from Iran are very incomplete, for they covered only those who paid a tax at the consulate for an exit permit. A large number of poor people crossed the frontier secretly and naturally were not counted. But even the fragmentary data point to the massive, and growing scale of migration from Iran to Russia."[10] Gilbar reports that between 1876 and 1890, some 195,000 Persian nationals entered Russia legally, that is with passports and permits. The migration levels increased significantly in the 1890s, and "in 1896 alone there were 56,000 legal emigrants to Russia." Issawi reports that in 1904, the number of visas issued to unskilled workers in Tabriz and Urumia alone was 54,846, and "in 1905, the total number of Iranians crossing the border was not less than 300,000." Even in 1911, during the crisis with

Russia over Morgan Shuster, Sobotsinskii reported that 193,000 Iranians left for Russia, while 160,000 Iranians returned from Russia, net emigration of 33,000. Even from as far away as Sistan and Baluchistan, large numbers went north to Russia. Russia, of course, was not the sole neighboring country to receive Iranian migrants: "In addition, there was migration from northeastern Iran to Herat and from the southeast and south to Karachi, Muscat, and even the Zanzibar islands."[11] Gilbar reports that in the years 1900-13 about 1.765 million Persian nationals left legally for Russia, while 1.412 million returned from Russia, implying a net legal emigration of 354,000 people to Russia alone. If those who traveled illegally are included, the number would be much higher. As pointed out by Issawi and Gilbar, these were mostly laborers and peasants seeking manual work in Russia.

From the above, it is clear that during 1900-1914, the urban population increased by nearly one million, while the population of Tehran doubled. Conservatively, 500,000 emigrated legally to Russia and neighboring countries, while an unknown number went illegally. If we accept Gilbar's proposition that the population was basically static, it follows that there must have been a large decline in the rural population and the agricultural labor force, and a big increase in agricultural productivity. There is no evidence of an "agricultural revolution," and Gilbar devotes considerable space to the alleged neglect of irrigation and transport by the Qajars. In short, rather than zero population growth, the increasing emigration to neighboring countries and rural-urban migration indicate a rapidly growing population. Large numbers of Iranian workers and families relied on employment in Russia and the resulting remittances. With the advent of World War I, this valuable source of employment and income dried up, and Iranian migrants were forced to return home only to become victims of famine and disease.

As noted above, before the famine, city streets and bazaars in Iran were "overcrowded with unemployed persons, ready to sell their labor for a piece of bread." Not so after the 1917-1919 famine. A severe labor shortage almost ruined Iran's carpet industry. In a dispatch dated October 1, 1919, Caldwell writes: "Persia has no manufactures whatsoever, except rugs." As a result of the famine an acute labor shortage had developed, making the Persian worker "the highest paid in the world." He adds: "It is frequently pointed out that, efficiency considered, the Persian worker is the highest paid in the world. For example, he gets an average perhaps four (4) krans

per day. At the present exchange rate this is around seventy-five (75) cents gold. Now an American ordinary laborer will average not less than six times as much accomplished, which makes the same work here cost four dollars and fifty cents ($4.50) per day."[12]

As noted, there is no mention of the 1917-1919 famine in Bharier's 1968 article. Although published in 1971, Issawi's economic history of Iran stops in 1914. Nor, surprisingly, is there a direct reference to the 1917-1919 famine in Gilbar's 1976 article. Gilbar's statement on the 1869-71 great famine includes the following: "Although famine and epidemic diseases caused the death of many thousands, they did not, except in one case, bring about a substantial decrease in the population of the country. Only in 1869-72, which came to be known as the great famine years, a combination of a severe famine in almost all regions and a countrywide attack of cholera and the local occurrence of other epidemic diseases, resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of the total population. Estimates of the number of people who died of hunger and cholera range from half a million souls to over three million. A check of the many sources which gave data on the effects of the famine and cholera on the nomadic as well as the settled population in various regions suggest that the number of deaths was about one and a half million souls. It thus seems that the ravages of the great famine years were more severe than at any other period in the 19$^{th}$ and *early 20$^{th}$ century* (emphasis added) Persia."[13] It appears that Gilbar is unfamiliar with the 1917-1919 famine and its severity. Though he does not specifically state, it also appears that Gilbar was of the opinion that 15% of the population perished in the 1870-71 famine. Using Gilbar's work in her 1986 article, Shoko Okazaki concluded: "The great famine of 1870-71 was arguably the most tragic event in the modern economic and social history of Persia."[14]

## AMERICAN REPORTS ON THE POPULATION OF IRAN, 1900-1920

Having rejected the proposition of zero population growth, one can look for alternative sources and numbers. Among those whose figure on the population of Iran was rejected by Gilbar on the grounds that the writer was somehow "unqualified," was that of Herbert M. Bowen, the American Minister to Iran in 1900. In January 1900, the State Department had instructed the American Legation in Tehran to report on the population of

the country. Bowen replied on March 15, 1900, and his reply reads: “I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 20th of January, 1900, regarding census statistics in Persia, and in reply beg to state that hitherto no census of the population of Persia has ever been taken, consequently no authentic statistics exist on the subject. It appears, however, from the observations of travelers, surveyors and others, whose estimates on the whole fairly agree, that the population at the present time is about twelve millions (12,000,000). The enclosed memorandum gives the ratios of the different nationalities which make up the total of the number mentioned above.”[15] It is clear that the figure of 12 million is not Bowen’s “estimate.” It is a consensus figure arrived at after consultation with those deemed competent to express an opinion, and its summary dismissal by Gilbar is just an easy way of ignoring information that is in conflict with his own opinion.

W. Morgan Shuster, the American Treasurer-General of Persia, has this statement on the population of Iran in his 1912 book: “The population of Persia has been singularly misrepresented; an old so-called census of sixty years ago seems to be the basis of the low figures given in some books and generally accepted by outsiders. Certain is that no census has been taken since then, but Europeans who are familiar with the situation estimate the population at from 13,000,000 to 15,000,000 inhabitants.”[16] The statement appears to be aimed at Houtum-Schindler. Thus on the basis of the figures given by Bowen and Shuster, the population grew at close to 2.0 percent per year during 1900-1910. However, there are grounds to believe that even Shuster’s upper range of 15 million in 1910 understates the population.

Additional information on the population of Tehran and of Iran in the year 1910 is given in a report by Charles Welles Russell, the American Minister to Iran. Russell’s report is dated May 11, 1910: “The Persian authorities are engaged in taking the census of Teheran, a notice to us indicates. Our English clerk-interpreter suggests that the results will understate the right number because the more ignorant will suspect some kind of a tax. He estimates the population at 300,000 and says it has increased from about 100,000 since 1872. From another foreigner I get the estimate of between 350,000 and 400,000, based on the amount of bread consumed, the bakeries being more or less under government supervision. The Persians think the population of the country has been much understated, one intelligent acquaintance of mine putting it at

17,000,000."[17] These figures leave no doubt that Iran experienced rapid population growth during the decade of the Constitutional Revolution (1900-1910), and the rapid growth had continued at least up to the outbreak of the war in 1914. Taking the mid-point between Shuster's lower figure of 13 million and the above Persian figure of 17 million, the result is a very conservative population estimate of 15 million for 1910, and an indication that the population growth rate was 2% per year during 1900-1910. It needs to be stressed that the latter estimate is a conservative one. After five years of residence and travel in Iran, the American Minister, Charles Welles Russell, found himself in agreement with the Persian opinion that the population of Iran was much greater than that reported by some resident Europeans. In a report on Russian-Persian relations dated March 11, 1914, Russell writes: "Persia is as large as Austria, France and Germany combined with a population of 20,000,000."[18] In another report dated June 14, 1914, Russell discusses the huge voter turn out for the recent parliamentary elections to the Third Majlis and refers "to the importance of the present revolutionary struggle of 20,000,000 Aryans in Persia."[19]

We close this section with some general observations on the population of the country. The 1920 population of Iran, as noted, is reported at 10 million by American and British sources. In other words, Iran's population in 1920 was the same as that of 1850. During this seventy-year period, world population doubled while Iran's was stagnant. In a report dated June 15, 1925, and entitled, "The Financial and Economic Situation of Persia," by Arthur C. Millspaugh, the American Administrator-General of the Finances of Persia and Morgan Shuster's successor, the following is stated on the population of Iran and of Tehran in 1925: "The population of Persia is estimated at about twelve millions, or an average of about 19 per square mile. The capital and the principal city of Persia is Teheran with about 250,000 inhabitants."[20] Thus, the 1925 population of Iran was the same as that of 1900, further indication that twenty-five years of population growth had been wiped out by war and famine. In addition, it had taken Iran another 15 years to recover its 1910 population: it was only in 1940 that the population of the country had again reached 15 million. The population of Tehran in 1914 was about 500,000. By 1925, it had only recovered to one-half of its 1914 level. Not until 1940 did the population of Tehran again reach 500,000.[21] Millspaugh also states: "Various partial censuses have

been undertaken in the past; and the Government is now inaugurating a complete census of the whole country." It had taken another 30 years to undertake a census: not until 1956 was a complete census taken and its results published. Those in control of Iran's destiny were not about to permit the undertaking of a census which would have, inevitably, drawn attention to the catastrophic losses resulting from the Great Famine. By 1927, Millspaugh was gone, unceremoniously dismissed by the regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi at the instigation of the British.

## THE TERRIBLE TOLL

As noted in chapter three, Murray's statement that one-third of Iran's population was lost to famine implies that 5 million had perished. The reality was much worse. At 12 million in 1900 and growing at 2% per year, Iran's 1910 population would have been 15 million. Continuing to grow at the same rate, Iran's population should have been 18.3 million in 1920. Instead the reported actual population in 1920 was 10 million, an indication that at least 8 million had perished. Again, this is a conservative estimate. As noted above, Persians believed the 1910 population to be 17 million. Moreover, Russell was of the opinion that the population of Iran in 1914 had reached 20 million. To the extent that the actual 1914 population exceeded the 16.2 million implied by our calculation, then the famine losses were greater than 8 million. It can be confidently stated that the population of Iran in 1914 was 16-20 million and that 8-10 million Iranians were lost to famine and disease during World War I. That is, one-half of Iran's population was wiped out, and that more people died of war-induced famine in Iran than all the combined battlefield casualties of the war. None of the belligerents suffered casualties of this magnitude in absolute and relative terms. It is difficult to find historical parallels where half the population was wiped out. One thing is very clear. Poor "neutral" Iran was the greatest victim of the Great War. The subsequent history of Iran cannot be understood without an awareness of this famine and its consequences. It is also astonishing that a calamity of this magnitude has remained concealed for much of a century.

The most revealing and significant indicator of the famine's toll is the decline in the population of Tehran. On the basis of daily bread consumption, as noted, Tehran's population in 1910 was about 400,000, and

it should come as no surprise that by 1917 its population had surpassed 500,000. In the Tehran elections to the Fourth Majlis in October 1917, 75,000 votes had been cast, the winners receiving 55,131 votes.[22] Given that only males 21 years or older could vote, and given an average household size of six, the population of Tehran could have easily surpassed 500,000. And this is indeed the figure given in Persian diplomatic reports.[23] As stated in the previous chapter, the Tehran police had reported that 186,000 had died of famine in the city during the Persian year 1296 (March 21, 1917 to March 20, 1918). Given that the famine in Tehran had continued at least up to August 1918, and was supplemented by the cholera outbreak and the flu epidemic in the fall of 1918, the number of victims could have easily surpassed 300,000. The population of Tehran in 1920 was reported at 200,000 by Caldwell, while the population figure given by Vice Consul Robert W. Imbrie in 1924 is even lower at 150,000.[24] There can be no doubt that Tehran had suffered a catastrophic decline in its population which had fallen by as much as 60%.

## NOTES

1. Bharier, Julian. "A Note on the Population of Iran, 1900-1966." *Population Studies, Volume* xxii, No. 2, July 1968, pp. 273-279.

2. Issawi, Charles P. *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 20, note 2.

3. Curzon to Hughes, memorandum dated March 1, 1922, entitled "Persia." File 891.51A/45, August 8, 1922.

4. Caldwell, Quarterly Report, No. 7, 891.00/1157, April 10, 1920; Sykes, *History of Persia*, Volume I, p. 13.

5. Gilbar, Gad G. "Demographic Developments in Late Qajar Persia, 1870-1906." *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1976, pp. 144-145.

6. Sobotsinskii, L.A. Persyia: Statistiko-ekonomomicheskii ocherk (St Petersburg, 1913) pp. 11-18. Reproduced in Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, pp. 33-35.

7. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 50.

8. The list includes Maragheh, Marand, Sanandaj, Ardebil, Dizful, Golpayegan Nain, Ardakan, Bandar Abbas, Qum, Resht, Zanjan, Senne, Borujerd, Neishabur, Bushire, Mohammerah, Mianeh, Arak, Saujbulak, Shustar, Shahrud, Saveh, Bijar, Birjand, Bojnurd, Quchan, Torbat,

Damghan, Sari, Gorgan, Enzeli, Rudsar, Langerud, Lankaran, Lahijan, Tonekabon, Jahrom, Amol, Babol, Chalus, Semnan, Sabzevar, Nahavand, Ahwaz, Bam, Behbahan, Kazerun, Abadeh, Linga, Malayer, Dolatabad, Shustar, Karind, Qasr-i-Shirin, Lar, Toos, Gunabad, Khwash, Zahedan, etc.

9. Sobotsinskii in Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 35.

10. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 51.

11. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 50.

12. Caldwell, Quarterly Report, No. 5, 891.00/1147, October 1, 1919.

13. Gilbar, "Demographic Developments in Late Qajar Persia," pp. 143-144.

14. Okazaki, Shoko. "The Great Persian Famine of 1870-71." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, 1986, 183-192.

15. Bowen, dispatch No. 24 and enclosure, Diplomatic Series, March 15, 1900. The breakdown was as follows: Moslems, 11.9 million; Jews, 50,000; Armenians and Nestori-ans, 40,000; Zoroastrians, 5,000; and foreign nationals, 1,500.

16. Shuster, W. Morgan. *Strangling of Persia*. New York, the Century Press, 1912, lx.

17. Russell, dispatch 9, 891.5011/-, May 11, 1910.

18. Russell, dispatch 584, 761.91/48, March 11, 1914.

19. Russell, dispatch 638, 891.00/828, June 14, 1914.

20. Millspaugh, A.C. "The Financial and Economic Situation of Persia." June 15, 1925. State Department file 891.51/381.

21. Majd, Mohammad Gholi. *August 1941: The Anglo-Russian Occupation of Iran and Change of Shahs*. University Press of America, 2012, pp. 25-27.

22. Caldwell, dispatch 332 and enclosures, 891.00/924, October 10, 1917.

23. "Situation in Persia." Statement presented by Zoka-ed-Dowleh, head of the Persian Delegation to the Plenary Assembly of the League of Nations, on December 6, 1920. Enclosure to dispatch 448, State Department file 891.51/225, January 12, 1922.

24. Imbrie, report 57, 891.00/1297, July 14, 1924.

## *Chapter Five*

# Depriving Iran of Food

From the beginning, Iranians had blamed British food purchases for the famine. In early 1917, the British had promised to instruct their forces in Iran to refrain from purchasing and storing grain and to help the country.[1] In a diary entry shortly after, Ain-ol-Saltaneh writes: "The Russian and British military authorities are continuously taking our food supplies and are hoarding it for themselves. In addition, to weaken and destroy us, the British government has even instructed its Imperial Bank of Persia to buy and store grain. In Qazvin which is many leagues distant from the headquarters of its police in the south (the South Persia Rifles), the said bank is buying and hoarding grain. Such is British policy."[2] The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 25, 1917 (No. 23) reports that according to reports reaching the paper, British officials, with the assistance of their local agents and middlemen, were busy buying wheat, and wherever grain was found, they bought it at an exorbitant price and stored it. They showed not the slightest care or concern for the suffering and hunger of the people around them. As a result of British purchases, a grain shortage had developed in Isfahan, Fars, Yazd and Kerman, and the people were terrified by the prospect of a famine. The *Nobahar* of December 16, 1917 (No. 73) writes that although lack of rainfall had reduced last year's crop, it could not possibly have caused a famine of this magnitude. For the past two and a half months the British had been buying all the available food, everything they could lay their hands on, in a deliberate policy to cause hunger and famine. They were expected to continue this practice until things hit the bottom, after which the British will try to appear as the "savior" of the people. Persian newspapers had continued to blame the British. In an article in the *Settareh-e-Iran* of January 22, 1918 (No. 97), a writer by the pen name of "newly arrived observer," states that the British had followed the same policy in India. Commenting on the famine in Khuzestan, the writer

claims that before the arrival of the British army in 1914, the province "could feed half of the world," today the entire population was in danger of extinction, and he holds the British responsible. The article reports that in Tehran each day a thousand children died of hunger and cholera. Each day, thousands of hungry people flooded Tehran, and that the streets and alleys were full of corpses who had died of hunger and cold and had been left unburied.

In early 1918, the British had arrested Soleiman Mirza Eskandari, a Majlis deputy and leader of the Democratic Party. In commenting on the affair, Kamalol-Soltan Saba, editor of *Settareh-e-Iran* wrote in the issue of February 21, 1918 (No. 110): "Now we know at whose instigation the Shrine of Imam Reza was bombarded. Now we know who expelled (Morgan) Shuster from Iran. It is the same government that has arrested Soleiman Mirza. It is the same government that seized your money in the bank, the same government that has beggared you. It is the same government that has bought and hoarded your grain and has caused famine in this unfortunate country. The famine and death has been brought by this merciless enemy. Each day, thousands of people, young and old, die a most agonizing death." Not surprisingly, after the British occupation of the northern half of the country in the spring of 1918, anti-British articles in the Iranian newspapers had ceased.

Detailed information on British food purchases is contained in the official history of the British military campaign in Mesopotamia written by Brigadier-General F.M. Moberly, memoirs of British military officers in Iran, as well as in the records of the Department of State. This chapter develops the available information in these sources, and shows that at a time when a vicious famine was decimating Iran's population, the British were engaged in large-scale purchase of food for the stated purpose of feeding their armies in Iran, Iraq and in southern Russia. In addition to their purchases in Iran, it is revealed in the records that the British had prevented importation of food from the United States, and had done all they could to prevent and discourage Iranian trade with Mesopotamia. Next, it discusses the information on British grain purchases in western Iran and Azerbaijan given by General Dunsterville and Major Donohoe. This chapter also describes the establishment and work of the "Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources," the British agency engaged in food purchases in Iran as well as Iraq. It is revealed from American diplomatic reports that the

purchase of grain by the British in western Iran was through the above agency, and that during its first 18 months of operation it had purchased in excess of 500,000 tons of foodstuff, which in the absence of "local" purchases, would have had to be brought from India. The records reveal the satisfaction of the British at "saving" so much shipping space through the "local" purchases. Detailed information on British food purchases in Gilan and the export of food from Iran to Baku is also given by Dunsterville. The famine in Gilan is particularly important because it is shown that Gilan had plunged into famine after its occupation by the British and the export of food from Gilan to southern Russia. British food purchases in eastern Iran and the export of the food to southern Russia for the stated purpose of feeding the British army is described in General Dickson's valuable book. The consequence of British grain purchases was the huge appreciation of the Persian currency and a depreciation of the pound sterling. The chapter also describes the British actions to prevent Iranian trade with the United States and Mesopotamia. The records reveal that at a time when Iran faced famine, the British had sabotaged food imports from the United States. Deprived of financial resources, and completely powerless because of the British military occupation of the country, the pitiful response of the Iranian government was to protest British food purchases and to issue decrees that "prohibited" food exports from Iran. In addition, it had imposed "food control" in the vicinity of Tehran. These measures had no impact on reducing suffering and death.

## "MESOPOTAMIA DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL RESOURCES"

The Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources was the principal agency for the British acquisition of food in Iraq and Iran. This section will first develop some of the information contained in Moberly's four-volume history of the British campaign in Mesopotamia.[3] Immediately upon the occupation of Baghdad on March 11, 1917, the British decided that "the supply resources of the country had to be tapped." Moberly elaborates: "For this purpose, a Local Produce Directorate was organized under Colonel E. Dickson and found much to do. The resources of the country round Baghdad, Baquba and Diltawa were found to be much greater than had been anticipated. Fresh meat was abundant, vegetable gardens extended in many

directions, and the plentiful supply of forage and fuel lessened considerably our transport difficulties. In addition, we were soon able to draw from the rich districts on the Euphrates between Nasiriya and Falluja, and Baghdad became the advanced base of supply."[4] The "Local Produce Directorate" was subsequently renamed as "Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources." Moberly states that already in April 1917, General Maude, Commander of the British forces in Mesopotamia, was actively "developing" the local food supply: "As regards food supplies he was still hard at work developing the local resources, though he had not yet been able to tap the rich districts round Hilla and Karbala. For this it was important to keep the necessary communications open from Arab marauders and he was accordingly arranging for Arab levies, who for this work would be armed and paid by us."[5]

The Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources began its work at the outset of the famine in Iran. Its work was aided by a series of proclamations which throw considerable light on how the British gained and consolidated control over the food supply. Proclamation No 6 of May 1, 1917, concerned "Declaration of Plant and Material." It reads in part: "Whereas it may be necessary from time to time to requisition for Civil and military purposes such plant or material, as may be available in or about the City . . . upon such terms and conditions as may be appropriate in each case. It is hereby ordered that all persons in possession of such materials or having information in regard to the same, shall forthwith furnish to the Military Governor, Baghdad, a full, complete and true list thereof stating the purpose for which such plant or material is being or may be used . . . Furthermore any such plant or material as may be required for the purposes mentioned shall be delivered up in good condition upon request." The proclamation then gives a list of nearly two hundred items subject to the proclamation. The punishment: "The penalty for contravention of this order, whether in respect of furnishing information, unlicensed usage or disposal of, or failure to deliver them up when called upon, may include confiscation of the goods, in all or in part and such other punishment or penalty as the Military Governor or other officer duly authorized, may under his powers inflict." It included the death penalty. Proclamation No. 13 of May 12, 1917, required owners of agricultural goods to report their holdings: It reads: "Whereas it may be necessary from time to time to requisition for military purposes such Grain and Fodder as may be available in or about

Baghdad upon such terms as may be deemed appropriate. I, Brigadier-General C. J. Hawker, Military Governor of Baghdad, in virtue of the authority vested in me by Lieutenant-General F. S. Maude, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding His Britannic Majesty's Forces in Mesopotamia, do hereby proclaim that: All persons in possession of Grain or Fodder of the specified classes and in excess quantities to the below mentioned schedule shall furnish to the Military Governor, Baghdad, a full, complete, and true list thereof as they stand on the 12th of May, 1917." The penalty: "All persons who fail to comply with this order will render themselves liable to the confiscation of their supplies, and to be proceeded against, and punished according to the regulations in force for the trial of persons before the Military Governor's Court." Proclamation No. 14 of May 26, 1917, had expanded the list of goods to be reported: "All Owners of any of the articles named in the schedule below are, within three days hereof, to declare in writing to the Deputy Director of Local Resources, Sassoon House, Baghdad, the quantity of each article held and the address at which it may be seen. In every instance the True Ownership is to be stated." Then the threat: "All persons who fail to comply with this order will render themselves liable to the confiscation of the goods held by them, and to be proceeded against and punished in accordance with the regulations in force for the trial of persons before the Military Governor's Court." The schedule mentioned consisted of wool, hides, skins, galls, opium, intestines, and gum.

The British had routinely requisitioned farm and transport animals. Hoping to discourage seizure of their animals, the owners had adopted a policy of deliberate neglect of the beasts. The British had not been amused and the practice had prompted Proclamation No. 15 of May 28, 1917: "Whereas Owners and Drivers of animals in Baghdad are held responsible for the good condition of the animals they own, or of the animals they are working. And whereas the confiscation, destruction, or such other treatment deemed necessary of animals that are found to have been illused, or which are unfit to work, shall be decided by the Veterinary Officer before whom the case is brought. Therefore, any person who illuses, tortures, cruelly beats or willfully works in an unfit state any animal, renders himself liable to be punished in accordance with the regulations in force for the trial of persons before the Military Governor's Court."[6] The combination of commandeering all beasts of burden as well as all boats on the Tigris and

the Euphrates, had rendered domestic trade as well as trade with Persia practically impossible. In a dispatch dated September 6, 1918, entitled "Notification regarding release of Native Craft by British Authorities," the American Consul in Baghdad, Oscar S. Heizer encloses a "Notice" that appeared in *The Basrah Times* of July 30, 1918, on the decision to "release a certain number of Native Craft now in Government employ." Heizer writes: "I have the honor to enclose herewith in triplicate copy of Notification by the Officiating Civil Commissioner of the release of certain river craft which will be of considerable importance to the merchants who have had great difficulty in finding means of transportation for their merchandise. If this order should be extended so as to include the river Tigris as far up as Bagdad it would greatly facilitate the importation of all kinds of merchandise for Bagdad and Persia."[7]

Proclamation No. 22 dated August 25, 1917, imposed the death penalty for food hoarding and profiteering. It reads in part: "Whereas it is convenient to take order to prevent the undue hoarding of foodstuffs in Baghdad. Now therefore be it known to all whom it may concern, that the following acts constitute offences against the authority of the General Officer Commanding the Army of Occupation and are punishable on conviction of the offender by any competent Court with the penalty of death or any lesser penalty at the discretion of the Convicting Court, or of the Army Commander, whensoever and wheresoever committed even by persons innocent of evil intent, namely: 1. The hoarding of foodstuffs by persons for their own consumption in unreasonable quantity; 2. The withholding of foodstuffs from the market with the intent to derive benefit from the consequent rise of prices; 3. The combining together of persons with intent to control the sale of any foodstuffs and thereby raising the price thereof to the profit of the combination." Proclamation No. 24 of September 30, 1917, had required reporting of stocks of goods held and had curtailed trade at the wholesale level: "Whereas it is necessary to make certain regulations concerning the transport of piece goods to and from Baghdad, it is hereby notified that all holders of stocks of piece goods in Baghdad must declare the extent and nature of their stocks to the Military Governor's office before the 15th of October, 1917." It adds: "After the promulgation of this Proclamation all retail sales will be allowed without any notification, but wholesale transactions must not take place unless authority has been obtained from the Military Governor's Office." The usual penalty: "Persons

who fail to comply with this Proclamation render themselves liable to the confiscation of the whole or part of their undeclared stock and to be proceeded against in the Military Governor's Court." Life for the ordinary Baghdadi was not made easy by these restrictions. Even the local employees of the American consulate were unable to obtain food, prompting intervention by the American consul. In a letter from the American consul, Oscar S. Heizer, dated October 3, 1917, and addressed "To the British Authorities in charge of the selling of grain, Bagdad," the following is stated: "The bearer Hadji Ali, a cavass of this Consulate desires to purchase grain for the use of his family. (S) Oscar S. Heizer, American Consul." It adds: "Copy of this letter to: Ali ibn Issa, Cavass. Ghulam Mohammed, Cavass. Naoum ibn Mansour, Cavass. Alwan ibn Hussein, Janitor. Saleh Shukur, Ismail Mohammed."[8]

By August 1917, Maude "had tapped the local resources so well that, without having to draw on the area round Baghdad where his main force was, he had been able to establish large reserves of supplies at Balad Ruz and on the Euphrates."[9] The British were very pleased with the work of the Department of Local Resources, and its director, Colonel Dickson. In a letter from Dickson to Oscar Heizer, American Consul in Baghdad, on the stationary of Department of Local Resources, Baghdad, dated August 30, 1917, the following is stated: "Many thanks for your letter of congratulations." Dickson adds: "They have certainly viewed my efforts in a very rosy light, and have been more than kind in awarding me the C.M.G."[10]

On November 22, 1917, Sir William Robertson, the British Chief of Staff at the War Office, sent a long telegram to General Marshall upon the latter's assumption of command of the British forces in Mesopotamia following Maude's death from cholera. One paragraph reads: "It is of vital importance to economise shipping to the fullest extent, and you will therefore make every endeavour to develop local resources to that end in consultation with Sir Percy Cox." Moberly adds: "Local resources had already been considerably developed by General Maude, but he had hitherto not considered that the military situation justified his acceding to Sir Percy Cox's requests that we should bring the fertile Middle Euphrates area between Nasiriya and Falluja under our control. We had, so far, penetrated southwards from Falluja to Hilla, Musaiyib and the Hindiya barrage and we had political officers, in Karbala and Najaf. But in view of Sir William

Robertson's pressing instructions and of the improved military situation, General Marshall decided at the beginning of December to bring this area under his control; and a number of detachments, released for this important duty by a reorganization of the line of communication forces, were sent to garrison various posts there."[11] The Department of Local Resources continued its excellent work: "Very good progress had been made in developing the local resources of the country. . . A very large proportion of all the grain required by the force had been obtained from the recent harvest."[12]

During May to September 1918, the British had directed their main effort to military operations in Iran. Moberly elaborates: "On the 18th the War Office agreed to the postponement of operations on the Tigris till mid-September, and to the extension, in the meantime, of the railway to Tikrit. General Marshall was at the same time instructed to develop General Dunsterville's activity [in Iran] to the utmost extent of the available transport. This telegram was followed by further instructions on the 21st, based on the latest information from Tehran, which indicated that a prompt display of sufficient military force in Persia would gain for us the active support of the Persian Government . . . General Marshall replied on the 24th May that the movement of troops into Persia, which had been delayed by the Kirkuk operations, would now proceed with the transport released from South Kurdistan."[13] On June 28, 1918, the War Office telegraphed Marshall to send more troops to Iran: "H.M. Government are not satisfied that we are taking full advantage of our opportunities or that in North-West Persia and on the Caspian our maximum effort is being made. Whole situation should be reviewed by you in light of more recent information regarding lack of enemy activity in the plains of Mesopotamia and local supplies. Information shows that, at any rate for some time to come, the enemy do not intend to make a further effort in Mesopotamia. By the end of this year you will receive ten more Ford van companies, and considerably more transport should be released on completing of the Hilla harvest. In order to increase your supply on the Resht road, transport on other lines must be cut down to the barest limits. In short, a greater and more sustained effort must be made in North-West Persia. H.M. Government attach more importance to success in that sphere and to securing temporary control of the Caspian than you appear to appreciate. The War Office concurs in this view. You should push

a railway survey towards Kermanshah beyond Khaniqin, advising me of practicability of ropeways if railways prove impossible. The Khaniqin-Resht road must be placed in the best possible state to stand traffic throughout next winter and depots must be energetically established along this road. Though there is no necessity to send troops to Tehran, it is necessary, in order to support our Minister's policy at Tehran and to induce Persian Government to subserve British interests, to show sufficient force at Kazvin. A company or two of British infantry is not sufficient for this purpose . . . While fully appreciating what your difficulties have been and the somewhat uncertain policy in the past involved by the rapid change of events, we are confident that you will realize now that your main attention must be directed towards Persia and the Caspian and that, in order to accomplish our objects at Baku, on the Caspian and at Tehran, a supreme effort will be made by you to utilize as many troops as you are able to maintain in North-West Persia."[14]

On June 30, 1918, General Marshall telegraphed London that "he was making every preparation to get ready the troops which General Dunsterville had previously asked for." Marshall's telegram of July 4, 1918, is particularly important because it provides additional documentary confirmation that at a time when a deadly famine was killing millions in Iran, in addition to preventing food imports, the British were engaged in large-scale purchase of foodstuffs: "On the 4th July General Marshall sent a further reply to the War Office telegram of the 28th June, saying that his Director of Local Resources was already at Kazvin organizing the purchase of supplies on a large scale." He also adds: "Part of the transport allotted for the collection and distribution of the Hilla harvest was being withdrawn and all available lorries, including those belonging to the artillery, were being utilized to supply Dunsterforce." Marshall concludes: "The wish of H.M. Government to show as much force as possible in North-West Persia is thoroughly realized and only space and lack of means to overcome that space limits my efforts to carry out that policy."[15] On July 6, 1918, Marshall telegraphs that, "owing to the extensive mechanical transport requirements of Persia, any advance beyond railhead on the Tigris and Euphrates fronts would be out of the question."[16] With the British effort concentrated on Iran, matters remained quite in Iraq during May-September 1918: "In Mesopotamia during the period under review . . . there were few

incidents of importance."[17] And until October 1918, in Iraq "there were no active operations of importance."[18]

In a telegram received on August 30, 1918, Southard reports: "General in charge of Mesopotamia local resources is now in Persia, and is taking under that department military line of communication and intends attempting to secure from the Persian Government permission to take charge of collection [of] government grain tax in that zone."[19] In a follow up dispatch, Southard elaborates. The role of the British purchases in Iran's famine is made abundantly clear in a report by Southard, dated September 6, 1918, filed from Baghdad, and entitled "Mesopotamia Department of Local Resources, and Extension of its Work into Persia." Southard begins: "I have the honor to refer to an interesting phase of activity which was developed by the late General Maude in connection with his taking from the Turks the greater part of Mesopotamia." He then describes the establishment of the "Department of Local Resources," and its purpose: "He [General Maude] initiated an organization known as the Department of Local Resources of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, the object of which was to investigate the extent of such local resources as might be of use to the Expeditionary Force, and to develop in all possible ways the production of grain, meat animals, native manufactures, and such other commodities of local production as might be used for military purposes, and thus obviate the necessity then existing for bringing from long distances outside considerable quantities of materials, particularly foodstuffs, leathers, wool, textiles, etc." Southard then describes the rapid expansion of the "Department of Local Resources": "The original organization consisted of an officer and a half dozen men, and in a year and a half it has grown to an organization consisting of more than two thousand under command of a Brigadier General." Southard then provides vital information: "I had the pleasure and good fortune to meet General Dixon, who is in charge of this work, in Persia, where he had come to take charge of the procuring and developing of local resources for the Dunster force in the zone through which their Bagdad-Caspian sea line of communication passes." Southard concludes with the following: "General Dixon informed me that his organization had during the year and a half in Mesopotamia [that is, February 1917 to August 1918], supplied about a half million tons of supplies which otherwise would have had to be brought from India and other places, and that a great deal of the shipping thus saved released

steamers for transport work on the Atlantic this year."[20] Evidently, with the release shipping space on the Atlantic, millions of Iranian lives had been sacrificed.

One week after Southard had written his report, the *Iran* of September 13, 1918, provides information on the work of the "Department of Local Resources," and its seizure of one-third of the wheat crop in Hamadan. The newspaper writes: "According to private information from Hamadan the British military officials there have taken measures for the preservation of the wheat supply and have discussed the matter with the proprietors and the people. The British have obliged these to divide their wheat into three equal parts: 1. For seed and use of the proprietors and villagers; 2. For the use of the people of Hamadan; 3. For the supply of the military. Because of the Amir Mofakham's declining to agree to this arrangement for the preservation of wheat some troubles have arisen between him and the British officials."[21] Assuredly, depriving an area of a third of its wheat crop is sufficient to cause scarcity if not famine. As below described, the famine had not ended until the summer of 1919. Documentary evidence shows that British grain purchases had continued to increase despite the famine. On July 16, 1918, Southard telegraphs on the expansion of British forces in Iran: "According to latest reports the movement of British forces into Persia via Bagdad-Caspian line of communication continues." He adds: "Number of troops to come limited by as yet insufficient transportation to bring food from Bagdad. Because of famine in Persia during the last year. [N]o food is available locally without depriving population which British Government seems particularly interested in preventing. Crops are good this year but it is not anticipated that there will be food in excess of Persian needs."[22] But then a month later Southard amends the previous statement on British grain policy: "Referring to my cable of July 16, 5 p.m., the British in view of the good crops have changed from their original plan and are contracting for supplies of grain for military forces. This will make prices higher but it is not expected materially to affect local food supply."[23] Caldwell also reveals that the British had resumed large scale purchases of Iranian grain: "Military authorities are buying grain reserves sufficient for several months locally but are experiencing considerable difficulty due to great stringency of silver coinage; [General Gilman] expects this difficulty to be over in about a month."[24] In a report dated January 10, 1919, White reveals that no

grain from Mesopotamia could be expected before the summer of 1919. White writes: “a metre gauge railway has now been completed from Baghdad to Ruz and the tunnel through Table mountain has been completed so that it is expected to have the railroad in operation as far as Kermanshah next summer. It will doubtless be continued still further later on and will be the means of opening up and developing western and central Persia. It will also allow Mesopotamian grain to be brought in to Kermanshah and Hamadan at reasonable prices and should be the means of preventing the recurrence of the terrible famine conditions which existed all along the route from Qasr-i-Shirin to Kazvin and Teheran last year.”[25] By then the famine was over.

Describing the “Line of Communication” in west and north Iran, General William Marshall wrote: “Colonel Cappers took charge of the supply arrangements and the formation of depots along the whole route, not only for foodstuffs but also for petrol and spare parts for the now endless procession of motor vehicles… I thought that Cappers had done wonders in the organization of supply and in this work had been most ably assisted by Colonel Moens.”[26] In discussing the feeding of the Christian refugees who left Urumia in the summer of 1918, Marshall reveals that the British depots were filled: “The mass of homeless and starving people had to be fed en route, and our supply depots which had been filled up with so much labour were soon exhausted. I suppose that from a humanitarian point of view one could not do less than we did, but what these refugees eventually cost the British tax-payer I would be afraid to say. We are an altruistic nation, and this was one of the penalties we had to pay for the ill-advised Persian venture.”[27]

## DUNSTERVILLE AND DONOHOE ON BRITISH FOOD PURCHASES IN WESTERN IRAN

Dunsterville’s task included the acquisition of food supplies for the British troops who were to come to Iran. He writes: “Among other matters that required attention was the question of supplies. Our own needs were considerable, and we had also to be prepared for any number of troops that might be sent up later to these parts. In the midst of the terrible famine that was now at its height I did not wish to draw supplies from the country that would still further reduce the stock available for the starving people. But we

soon had accurate intelligence on the supply question and found that there was sufficient grain and fodder for all, though no abundance, and it was only being held up to secure higher prices. Unfortunately, however, the result of our small purchases was to send prices still higher, and each fractional rise meant the death of many individuals."[28] Having admitted grain purchases by the British on page 62, the same is denied on page 64.[29] Having denied grain purchases, Dunsterville reveals on the same page that the British had paid "good prices."[30] A report by Southard leaves no doubt that despite the claims that the British forces in Persia were fed with food from Mesopotamia, they had been fed from local Persian supplies: "During the winter months there is a comparatively heavy snow-fall in that part of Persia through which the Bagdad-Caspian line of communication passes. The several mountain passes from the frontier on to Hamadan are frequently so blocked with snow that traffic is exceedingly difficult. At the end of the winter there are heavy rains which, with the melting snows, make the use of the imperfect road difficult. These are matters which have to be taken into consideration by the British in maintaining their forces on the line to the Caspian, and because of the difficulties the number of troops which can be supplied from Bagdad is very restricted. During the latter half of the summer just ending a great effort has been made to carry in supplies to stock the depots which have been established at various places along the line."[31]

Elsewhere in his narrative, Dunsterville provides information on prices paid by the British for the grain. In a letter dated May 5, 1918, from Hamadan, he writes: "The famine here has been awful . . . We are buying forward crops at 40 tomans and hope to get some for less. Cases of cannibalism have occurred in the town. Many die daily, and men have actually died while actually on relief work. Now that the snow has melted and spring has begun the people go out and graze in the fields like cattle."[32] Many of these unfortunate people had died while they were grazing the fields. In May 1918, Dunsterville traveled between Kazvin and Hamadan and had admired the wild flowers: "The most beautiful flowers were those on the top of the Sultan-Bulaq Pass, exactly in the spot where we found seven corpses of unfortunate victims of the famine. Such corpses strewed the road between Kasvin and Hamadan at intervals throughout its length."[33]

The Iranian government had tried to prevent the British from purchasing the food supply. Dunsterville elaborates: “I wanted not only to supply our own needs, but also to begin laying in stocks for the troops that must eventually move up this road. But we were hampered by the famine conditions, by the resistance of the local officials and by an order issuing from the Government at Teheran that the British were to be prevented from getting supplies of any sort.”[34] The matter is described in detail. Dunsterville reveals that the British were secretly intercepting all official communication between the government in Tehran and the provincial administrations in western Iran. The Iranian government had ordered that all grain contractors selling grain to the British were to be arrested. The order had been carried out, but immediately Dunsterville had pressured the Iranian governor to release them.[35] By April 1918, Dunsterville was able to report that “Supplies were now easier to obtain and Captain Campbell, the Supply Officer, was able to report that stocks had reached a figure that made the prospect of any further crisis very remote. Even if supplies were not always easily obtainable we knew where the wheat hoards were, and only required troops to insist on their surrender at a fair price. Thus, except for the bacon and jam part of the ration, we could guarantee to feed a large number of troops without difficulty.”[36] In a letter dated May 5, 1918, from Hamadan, Dunsterville further discusses the difficult supply situation and expresses satisfaction at his ability to procure supplies: “In spite of this, supplies come in very well, and I could supply a Brigade in actual bread and meat between here and Menjil.”[37] Dunsterville had moved his headquarters to Qazvin on June 1, 1918. He describes the supply situation at Qazvin: “We found prices in Kasvin about the same as in Hamadan, but supplies were not difficult to obtain.”[38]

Information on British grain purchases in Azerbaijan is provided by Donohoe. Now we can begin to understand why the famine in Azerbaijan lasted until the summer of 1919, two years after the departure of the Russians. On May 21, 1918, “a small British column” left Hamadan for the north-west region of Iran, and after six days the force was in Azerbaijan and in the country of the Afshar tribe, whose chief was Jahan Shah Afshar, also known as Amir Afshar. Afshar had invited the British to stay at his residence in the village of Karasf: “The Amir Afshar proved an admirable host, and supplies were forthcoming in abundance from the many villages

in his domain."[39] Although a slippery person to deal with, Donohoe adds, "for all that, during the darkest of the famine days, he kept the British commissariat well supplied with grain, and that, too, at a reasonable price."[40] On May 31, 1918, the British had taken Zanjan. The 24,000 inhabitants of the town had been terrified: "In a moment we flung ourselves into the saddles and, with a wild British cheer that shook sleepy folk out of their beds, we dashed across the stone bridge spanning the river and so into Zinjan… If our sudden arrival failed to surprise the Turks, it certainly alarmed the inhabitants of Zinjan. Panic seized them. In the bazaars the women and children fled at our approach, and the shopkeepers, trembling in every limb, made frantic efforts to bolt and bar their premises." He concludes: "Shutters came down with a run, and as a slight token of local appreciation, and in honour of our coming, all bazaar prices were immediately, and by universal consent, increased one hundred per cent."[41] The reason for the increase in prices is demonstrated upon the arrival of the British at Mianeh: "When the Wagstaff Mission finally reached Mianeh from Zinjan it began to collect grain supplies, by purchase, and set to work to raise and train irregulars… There are the Merchants' and Grain-Growers' Guilds, and they were always attempting to dip deep and dishonestly into the British treasure chest. It would be doing this delectable spot no injustice to say that, in proportion to its population, it can boast a greater percentage of unchained rogues than any other town in the whole province of Azerbaijan."[42]

Upon abandoning positions in the face of Turkish advance, the British had routinely destroyed foodstuff they could not carry. Leaving a village with the approach of the Turks, Donohoe states: "There was no time to be lost. So, destroying our surplus stores, and with grim faces, we set off in the darkness of the night."[43] At Mianeh, as the British were about to evacuate, the people had shown their true feelings to the British, including landowners and the notables: "With one exception, all the district notables —who had always been reiterating their professions of friendship, and to whom we had paid large sums as subsidies for faithless, turn-tail levies, or as purchase price for grain—went over to the enemy."[44] Just before abandoning Mianeh on September 8, 1918, Donohoe reports, the British had destroyed its food stock: "All the stores of wheat and barley which had been accumulating in Mianeh were destroyed before evacuation, and the

rearguard crossed the Karangu without molestation either from the Turks or from their new allies, the Mianehites, who were hourly showing themselves more hostile to the retiring British."[45] Assuredly, the destruction of the city's food stocks at the time of a famine constitutes war crime and genocide.

Posted as a British political officer to Bijar in Kurdistan, Donohoe reports that its governor had "hinted that, as the district was in the throes of famine, he would have no objection to collaborating in the purchasing of wheat with British money in order to alleviate the prevailing distress."[46] And purchase of wheat by the British had continued. Describing one of the landowners, he writes: "Our 'friend' was a confirmed 'pulophile,' which is an impromptu Perso-greek expression for 'money-lover,' and, while awaiting our military downfall, he had no conscientious objections to seeking to rob us right and left in wheat transactions."[47]

From the beginning, the British had claimed that their forces in Iran did not rely on local food supplies and that they brought in all of their needs and did a great deal of famine relief. For example, the announcement by Colonel Kennion, the British consul at Kermanshah, given below, included the following: "The Organized British Army is adequately equipped and supplied with all requisites for the journey such as provisions etc., and does not need assistance from others, but in case it should purchase from the Persians, a fair and just price will certainly be paid to the owners."[48] The same point is made by Francis White in his report on western Persia: "The Russian and Turkish troops in their successive advances and retreats through this region lived wholly on the country, which has been drained of the last dreg. The British, on the contrary, are bringing their supplies with them and are entering very largely upon famine relief among the needy. At Karind eighteen hundred famine sufferers are given employment on road building by the British authorities under the supervision of Mr. Francis M. Snead, an American missionary from Kermanshah. Similar work is being done on a smaller scale in the city of Kermanshah and also at Hamadan."[49]

The reality was otherwise. A 1915 telegram from the British consul in Bush-ire to the governor of Kazerun includes the following: "England is at war with Germany and not with the Islamic governments and has proved that by letting Turkey have lots of grain from Persia and elsewhere."[50] The *Settareh-e-Iran*, in its issue of September 28, 1917, reveals that the British

had been purchasing grains in south Iran from early on. The article states: "The agents of this same England have been buying and storing all the food-stuff they are able to get in different parts of the South. Whenever the English officers arrive the prevailing good order is taken away. In all the different parts of the South the South Persia Rifles have caused such a panic that no one there considers his life and his goods as his own."[51] The matter is confirmed by Sir Percy Sykes himself. In discussing the two routes between Kerman and Shiraz, along the direct route via Sirjan and Niriz, Sykes complains that "supplies were scarce along this route."[52] In October 1916, when Sykes decided to march from Isfahan to Shiraz, he reveals that wheat remained available in Isfahan: "Thanks to the telegraph officials, there was little difficulty about supplies, which had been arranged from Isfahan for part of the way; but the Consul informed us that there was great scarcity at Shiraz, and we therefore took a quantity of wheat with us."[53] Sykes arrived in Shiraz on November 11, 1916. Farman-Farma had arrived in October 1916 as governor general. Shortly after Sykes' arrival, he states that "owing to scarcity of foodstuffs, I had to buy wheat outside of Fars, a cruel commitment in addition to my other difficulties."[54] Clearly, the "cruel commitment" indicates that no small quantities were involved. On the expenses of the South Persia Rifles, Sykes states that the force was expensive for three reasons. First, the two headquarters were far inland at Kerman and Abadeh. Secondly, due "to the dearness of local supplies owing to locusts, drought, and anarchy." Thirdly, the appreciation of the kran. Before the war, the kran was worth four pence but by 1917 it had increased to seventeen pence, "thereby doubled our expenditure in Indian currency."[55]

Sykes tries to blame the famine on the nomadic tribes, a novel argument: "Persia had been brought to misery and poverty by the insecurity of life and property, and the nomads were the perpetrators of outrage after outrage which had materially reduced the population in numbers and wealth… The landowners received demands for money and supplies, and, if they did not submit to this blackmail, their villages were looted."[56] Having blamed the tribes, he next blames the Russians and the Turks. After the Russian Revolution, the Russians had begun to withdraw: "By the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on March 3, 1918, it was laid down that Persia should be evacuated by Russian and Turkish troops. In the winter of 1917-1918, the movement had already begun. The Russians, before leaving

the trenches, sold munitions and equipment to the Turks, and then marched north, plundering and pulling down houses as they went, in order to secure food and fuel… Western and North-west Persia, indeed, paid a heavy price for the helplessness of its Government. Famine conditions prevailed throughout the country, which had been denuded of supplies and livestock."[57] During the famine, it was claimed that wheat could not be transported because of lack of adequate roads. Sykes reveals that more than a thousand miles of roads existed in the south of Iran: "Motoring in Persia involved many risks, especially at the onset, but we opened up altogether more than a thousand miles of main routes, and nothing that we did appealed so much to the peasants and caravan owners. The khans, too, were longing for the day when they could buy cars and visit their estates in comfort… Touring cars ran easily over the hard surface, but motor lorries would soon have made deep ruts. In other words, the routes in Southern Persia were suitable for certain amount of light motor traffic, but not for the heavier motor lorries."[58]

In his report on the famine in Iran, Francis White provides additional insight on the purchase of grain by the British army. From his account, it is clear that the British purchases of grain for their army of four hundred thousand (400,000) men in Mesopotamia and for their forces in Iran had been a main reason for the grain shortage and famine. White states: "Unfortunately the sufferings of the people are in many places aggravated by the hoarding of grain by the rich merchants who desire to sell it at large profits to the British for their troops. The presence of the British has been used as a pretext by their enemies to explain the high cost of grain to the people, who are told that it is due to all grain being bought up to feed the English troops. Fortunately the harvest this year is very good, not only in Persia but also in Mesopotamia where a very large acreage was sown under the supervision of the British military authorities. The crop there is expected to be large enough to feed the entire Mesopotamia forces—(confidentially) —four hundred thousand in number—with a surplus for exportation and some of this will be used for relief work in Western Persia." The next part of the report also establishes the fact that the British had been buying large amounts of grain at least up to the middle of April 1918: "The price of wheat in Kermanshah was one hundred and twenty tomans (two hundred dollars) a kharvar (650 pounds) on April 15th when Colonel Kenion, British consul there, posted a notice in the bazaar stating that the British were not

going to buy any wheat in Kermanshah but on the contrary were bringing in all they needed for their troops from Bagdad and an extra amount which would be given out free to the people. The price of wheat fell to eighty tomans a kharvar over night and has since continued to decline."[59]

## PREVENTION OF TRADE WITH IRAN

The British were not anxious to promote trade between Iraq and Iran. Proclamation No. 17 issued in Baghdad on June 9, 1917, had prohibited the export of Persian currency, the kran. It reads: "I, Brigadier-General C. J. Hawker, Military Governor of Baghdad, in virtue of the authority vested in me by Lieutenant-General F. S. Maude, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding His Britannic Majesty's Forces in Mesopotamia, do hereby proclaim that: Until further notice the export of Krans from Baghdad either by land or water is prohibited, except with the written permission of the Chief Political Officer, or other Officer authorized by him to act on his behalf. Any person failing to comply with the above order renders himself liable to be punished in accordance with the regulations in force for the trial of a person before the Military Governor's Court."[60] Proclamation No. 19 of June 27, 1917, had severely restricted the export and import of goods. It reads: "I, Brigadier-General C. J. Hawker, Military Governor of Baghdad, in virtue of the authority vested in me by Lieutenant-General F. S. Maude, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding His Britannic Majesty's Forces in Mesopotamia, do hereby declare that: Whereas merchants may import into and export from Baghdad goods, the following regulations must be observed: 1. Applications for permission to export goods from Baghdad must be submitted in writing to the Blockade Officer at Beit Sassoon. 2. No goods may be exported from Baghdad except upon passes bearing the signature of the Blockade Officer. 3. Each exporter will be required to deposit a security equal to the value of the goods he desires to export. This security will be released upon report being received of the safe arrival of the goods from the Blockade Officer at the town of destination in this country. 4. Application for permission to import goods into Baghdad must be made to the Blockade Officer at the place from which it is desired to dispatch goods." The penalty: "Any person failing to comply with the above regulations renders himself liable to be punished in accordance with the

regulations in force for the trial of a person before the Military Governor's Court."

In a letter addressed to the "Blockade Officer, Bagdad," dated September 14, 1917, Oscar S. Heizer, the American Consul in Baghdad, writes: "An American firm in New York has telegraphed for tanned goat skins. Can you give a pass for the shipment of 13 bales of such tanned goat skins bought for the account of this firm a few days before the outbreak of the war and which have been stored here ever since."[61] The reply is from Colonel E. Dickson, Director of Local Resources, Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, is dated September 25, 1917, and is on the stationary of the "Department of Local Resources." It reads: "Your letter No: 610 has been carefully considered by the Civil Commissioner and myself, and in reply thereto I beg to inform you that it is regretted that as, under instructions of Board of Trade, the export of hides and skins is subject to restrictions, permission to export the skins to which you refer cannot be granted."[62] On October 4, 1917, Heizer had again written to Colonel E. Dickson, C.M.G., Director of Local Resources, Bagdad: "I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of September 25th concerning the prohibition of the export from Bagdad of hides and skins to America." He adds: "I now desire to inquire if this applies to such articles as rugs, sheep casings for sausages, gum tragacanth, tombac and sheeps wool?"[63] The reply from the Department of Local Resources is dated October 11, 1917, and is signed by Lt. Colonel G. W. Reed on behalf of the Director of Local Resources, Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. It reads: "In reply to your letter No: 610 of the 4th instant, I am to inform you that the prohibition applies to all articles falling within the category of raw wool, hides and skins. Application to export the remaining commodities you mention should be made to the Collector of Customs, Basra, by intending exporters."[64] In a dispatch dated October 9, 1917, Heizer reports: "I have the honor to inform the Department that by order of the Military Governor of Bagdad it is prohibited to export from Bagdad more than one ratal (12 ½ Kilos) 27 ½ pounds of dates at one time. No permit is required by persons leaving Bagdad with this amount."[65] On November 27, 1917, Heizer continues: "Referring to this Consulate's despatch No. 65, of October 9, 1917, (File No. 690) in regard to the prohibition of the export of dates from Bagdad, I now have the honor to report the following, published in *The Times of India*

*Illustrated Weekly*, Bombay, November 7, 1917, under the title 'Dates – and Basra'" The press statement was as follows: "The Collector of Customs at Basra, in a notice appearing in the *Basra Times* of 13th, October, refers to the recent notice that the export of dates in cases and baskets is prohibited except with his permission and gives further warning that 'in order to ensure that the quantities required by the Military authorities shall be forthcoming the issue or permits will be restricted…' while 'it may be necessary in furtherance of this policy to cease issuing permits at an early date.'"[66]

On April 15, 1918, the British had announced the new regulations concerning imports to Iraq from Iran and it had been duly published in the Baghdad newspapers, including the *El Arab*. In reporting the matter, Heizer provides a copy of the announcement and its translation: "Also original and translation of a notice appearing in the same newspaper regarding the collection of duty on merchandise arriving from Persia for the territory under British occupation in Mesopotamia." The "Notice" is entitled "Payment of Duty on Imports from Persia." It reads:

All tobacco and merchandise imported from Persia are subject to an ad valorem duty of 10 per cent which duty is payable at the Custom House. Persons importing goods from Persia will observe the following rules:

A declaration of the goods imported should be transmitted to the custom authorities either at Bagdad, Kanakin, or Mendali.

If the goods should pass via either of the routes leading to the above mentioned places, the owners of the goods will communicate, in writing, with the first Political Officer they come into contact with on their journey, and a declaration will be made to him. The Political Officer after having obtained a guarantee from the owner, will issue a pass permitting the passage of the merchandise to Bagdad and its delivery to the Custom House for the collection of duty.

The owners of the merchandise are permitted, after having paid the customs duty, to forward the whole or part of the same to any place within the territories occupied by His Britannic Majesty's Government, on notifying the Customs authorities to the effect, and obtaining a free pass declaring that the duty had been paid in full and that there is no objection to the forwarding of the merchandise.

A pass should always accompany the goods stating that it is intended to pay the duty in Bagdad, or a pass declaring that the duty has been paid in full. Without either one or the other of these passes, the merchandise will be liable to seizure and confiscation.

*Dated Baghdad, April 15, 1918, Collector of Customs*.[67]

Clearly, these regulations were intended to stifle Iranian trade with Iraq. Thus unable to export such products as tobacco, the Iranians were unable to import grain which was plentiful in Iraq. Heizer also reports on regulations concerning exports to Iran from Iraq. On April 23, 1918, the British Civil Commissioner for Iraq had published the following notice: "The export of goods to Persia is now freely permitted, subject to the usual Blockade rules." It adds: "The export of the following articles is not at present permitted: Arms, ammunition, metals, kerosene oil and petrol, rubber, tea, coffee, sugar, and certain other articles, details of which are ascertainable on application to the Blockade Officer." On the same day, April 23, 1918, Heizer addressed the following letter to the Blockade Officer, Baghdad. It reads: "Sir: In the *Bagdad Times* today there is a notice to the effect that one may ascertain from your office the articles which may not be exported to Persia. Will you please give me a list of the articles in question."[68] The reply also dated April 23rd is on the stationary of the Department of Local Resources (Blockade Branch). It reads: "The notice referred to shows the articles prohibited at the present. For all articles a Blockade Pass on guarantee is required and trade is allowed only in the hands of merchants approved by the Civil Commissioner and the Consuls at Kermanshah and Hamadan. Export of piece goods (articles of cloth and silk including clothing) is allowed, but not woollen goods manufactured in Baghdad." It adds: "On receipt of estimated requirements from the Consuls at Kermanshah and Hamadan, the export of food stuffs (grain and dates etc.) will be allowed." It ends: "All export is to be consigned to H.M's. Consuls pending further orders. Signature and Seal of Blockade Officer, Baghdad."[69]

In a report dated August 5, 1918, and entitled "Trade with Persia," Consul Heizer gives additional information: "One of the most important factors in the commercial life of Bagdad is the opening up of the Persian Trade route closed for several years for political reasons. Trade with

Kermanshah was permitted by the British authorities in June for cotton goods and generally speaking for all articles not specially required for military use. Sugar, coffee and tea included in the list of blockade articles were only permitted to be exported in July in a limited quantity, approximately two hundred to two hundred tons per month. Rice which is an article of important military necessity was nevertheless recently permitted to be exported in view of the exceptionally difficult position of food supplies actually prevailing in Persia. Exportation as regards the quantity to be exported is subject to certain formalities in order to prevent the exported articles reaching the enemy. Trade with Kermanshah is only permitted when goods are consigned to certain specified firms registered at the British Consulate there." Consul Heizer also provides information on the grain market in Iraq: "In order to avoid any eventual speculation and possible profiteering from grain, the government decided to prohibit trading in grain and to localize the actual stocks. I mean by this that the stock actually existing in Hilla or Amara could not be imported to Bagdad and vice versa. Nevertheless in order to relieve the food situation in Bagdad the government allowed the import from Bassorah of large quantities if Indian wheat and rice. The crop this year does not seem to be as large as expected. Whereas Hilla usually supplies Bagdad with wheat, it is not expected that it will be in a position to do so this year, as prices of grain advanced about 25% in two or three days when the authorities permitted its export to Bagdad. Barley is certainly in a much better condition and the government is buying at the rate of 100 rupees ($32.44) per ton."[70]

Despite the various British pronouncements on the "freedom" of trade with Iran, trade with Iran was severely restricted. In a report dated November 5, 1918, Consul Heizer writes: "Hitherto permission to export goods to Persia from Bagdad and the Occupied Territory of Iraq has been restricted and at times altogether cut off, but by the terms of the proclamation read by the Commander-in-Chief on November 2nd, 1918, upon the occasion of the celebration of the capitulation of Turkey one of the statements made was that 'within the limits of the Occupied Territory there will be complete freedom of trade and relaxation of blockade restrictions, and also a similar relaxation of the restrictions on personal movement.' This will probably give a great impetus of trade and the movement of merchandise." In addition, Heizer states: "According to statistics of the custom house, the following goods have been sent to Persia from the

province of Bagdad by the land route" during the months of June, July, and August, 1918. No wheat, barley or dates were exported to Iran. Only $17,438.50 worth of rice was exported to Iran during August of 1918.[71] Heizer also gives information on transportation to Iran: "The most important means of overland transport from Bagdad to Persia is the camel which carries a load of from 400 to 500 pounds which must be divided into packages which can be tied on either side of the saddle. Before the war a load of this size could be sent from Bagdad to Kermanshah for $8.80. At the present time the transportation of such load by camel costs $73.00 . . . Mules and donkeys are substituted for camels during the winter. They make the trip in ten to twelve days to Kermanshah whereas the camels require 20 days." Heizer concludes: "The British military authorities have greatly improved the road to Teheran and are running automobiles and auto-trucks for military transportation without any difficulty. A railroad has been built nearly to the Persian frontier and the probabilities are that we shall have railway facilities from Bagdad to Kermanshah if not to Teheran before very long."

The prohibition of food exports to Iran was despite the fact that there was an abundant harvest in Iraq in 1918. In a report dated June 11, 1917, Consul Heizer writes: "Farmers are now exceedingly busy, since confidence has been restored, getting ready to increase their acreage and repairing and putting in order their water pumps for irrigation purposes which they have not been able to use since the outbreak of war on account of the prohibitive price of petroleum. They were obliged to revert to the old method of drawing water from the river by the use of leather bags lifted by horses or oxen by means of a rope and a pulley and this has tended to greatly reduce the area cultivated. The British authorities are now furnishing petroleum at reasonable prices so that the petroleum pumps are again at work pumping water for irrigation purposes." He continues: "The soil is very fertile and a variety of crops are raised. Wheat and barley flourish most abundantly at Hilda [Hillah?], Fellouja and Beled Rouz. Rice is raised chiefly at Hindia and Beled Rouz. Lentils, peas, maize, beans and millet are raised on both banks of the Tigris river by the Arab tribes. Large quantities of these articles are brought down the river from the Mosul district also."[72] On December 17, 1917, he adds: "The authorities are making arrangements to introduce all kinds of modern agricultural implements into the country."[73] In a report dated February 25, 1918, Consul Heizer reports on the agricultural situation

in the Bagdad district: “The prospects for abundant crops of wheat, barley, rice, lentils and oats in the region round about Bagdad are exceedingly good this year . . . It is estimated that the crops planted in that region this season are eight times the amount planted last year and four times larger than the best previous year.” Heizer adds: “It is estimated that there are 1,360,000 acres of land commanded by the Hindia Barrage which can be irrigated by the waters of the Euphrates as soon as the canalization is completed.”[74] On May 16, 1918, Heizer continues: “The abundant rains this spring throughout all Mesopotamia have assured an unusually good crop of barley Rice is being planted now under very favorable circumstances in the region of Beled Rooz to the north and east of Bagdad. The rice crop is usually gathered in the month of October.”[75]

In a report dated June 25, 1918, and entitled “Crops in Mesopotamia,” Consul Heizer describes the abundant harvest of 1918, confirming the fact that while there was ample grain in Iraq, Iran next door had starved: “From exhaustive inquiries made concerning the crops in Mesopotamia for 1918, the unanimous opinion is that the barley crop has been unusually large, from four to five times the crop of last year, and the quality good. Especially in the Euphrates valley from Musayeb above the great Hindiah Barrage down to Abu Shukhair the official estimate places the crop at three times the best crop ever raised before. This applies to barley and wheat. The crops on the river Hai connecting the Tigris river with the Euphrates river midway between Bagdad and Bassorah are reported as excellent. In the Suq area the yield is above an average of a normal winter crop. The official estimate for all of Mesopotamia shows a surplus of 120,000 tons of barley and wheat after supplying the civil inhabitants. In 1912, 146,000 tons were exported from Bassorah, the highest figure heretofore known.” He adds: “Much of the seed was brought from India by the British authorities and supplied on shares as the farmers did not have the necessary seed . . . It is too early to be certain of the date crop but so far conditions have been favorable . . . The estimated yield for this year is placed at 100,000 tons of dates.”[76]

Having witnessed the pitiful scene during his lunch at Kasr-i-Shirin, South-ard also points out that just across the border in Iraq there was plenty of grain to be had. There was also plenty of grain in India. He adds: “All of this when within a few hundreds of miles there were food in plenty, but which was not available because of lack of transport… In parts of Persia, I

am told, there were considerable stores of grain to be had at reasonable prices; and that just over the frontier in Mesopotamia there were stores of grain to be had. But there was no way to transport this grain. Unfortunate Persia has not been permitted to develop her roads or railroads, there being less than one hundred miles of railroads in all this great country, and the development of transport would, it seems, be of greater importance in relief work than in distributing actual money in the country. Transport and actual food, and not money, is the need within Persia, and food can be supplied both from without and within if transportation is available." Southard adds: "These were the first of many sights and experiences of this sort which I experienced in a brief trip through Persia; which indicated the terrible starvation existing in a land with plenty of food available in some parts of it, and in some of the neighboring countries; but which was not available because of the lack of transport. One felt ashamed to eat his own food in the face of it, and wondered if these poor people had ever known what it was to have a full stomach of wholesome food. After these experiences I could never refuse a contribution to feed the starving; and I believe no other normal human could refuse. I glory that there are so many big-hearted people in our own United States who are interested in and who, at least partially, realize the needs of these unfortunate victims mainly of a backward economic and political development. The generosity of the American people in relief contributions has established for them a reputation among these poor unfortunates which they should be proud to maintain." Southard concludes by pointing out the need to bring in grain from India: "The Persian famine-sufferer can neither eat nor plant money, but he can eat and plant grain. With India near by as a place where great quantities of grain can be purchased at reasonable prices, it would seem to be much better to take in supplies of that grain to the needy than to distribute the money for which the peasant is in famine times often unable to obtain food. Bringing in grain would also aid in breaking the corners in the available grain supply in the country, which the bringing in and distribution of relief money aids the wealthy farmers to maintain to their own great profit, and to the general economic distress of the mass of the Persian people… A drive for funds to buy motor trucks or other transport; to employ peasant labor in road-building; and to buy and bring in grain from India or other neighboring countries and less accessible parts of Persia… American business has great possibilities in these Near Eastern districts

where the native is already predisposed in favor of American goods and looks up to the American people and the American government because of even the little he knows of our proverbial generosity and political ideals."[77]

In another report, Southard again makes it clear that the "inability to transport" grain from Iraq to Iran was not due to absence of a good road. He points out that at least by May 1918 a very good road existed between the Mesopotamia border and the Caspian Sea. Yet, as described above, not only the famine in Iran had continued until July 1919, but that the British had purchased a great deal of grain in Iran thereby aggravating the famine situation. Southard describes the road conditions: "The road from Ruz into Persia as far as Hamadan, a distance of somewhat more than 350 miles, has several long and difficult mountain passes and has been little better than a caravan route through a rough and comparatively barren country, although some road-building had been done by the Russians and Turks during their occupation of the line in 1915, 1916, and 1917. A very good road exists from Hamadan on to the Caspian, a distance of approximately 300 miles. Transport for a military force and its supplies accordingly offered difficulties, and it was impossible to use the road to any considerable extent until the late spring when the rains had ceased and the snow in the passes had melted. Sufficient improvements were made, however, so that by the middle of May of this year motor trucks and Ford motor vans were moving over this route into Persia carrying troops and supplies." In the same report, Southard leaves no doubt that a good road was in existence from Ruz to Hamadan: "The work of improving the road has continued and by the end of August a fair amount of good road had been made on the caravan route from Ruz to Hamadan."[78]

While good roads existed in some parts of Iran, gasoline could not be found in a country that was a large producer of petroleum. Not only had the British sabotaged Iran's foreign trade, by depriving Iran of gasoline, they had also rendered domestic trade and travel practically impossible by making transportation extremely difficult and costly. In a dispatch dated April 29, 1918, Caldwell reports: "As illustrating some of the abnormal conditions created by the war and famine in Persia and the high prices consequent, I have the honor to submit these facts on the cost of local transportation." He elaborates: "Owing to the scarcity and almost unbelievably high prices prevailing for grain and for food stuffs the feed for pack mules, donkeys, horses and camels has reached the price of twenty-

five to thirty dollars per bushel of barley, ninety to one hundred dollars per ton for alfalfa and twenty-eight to thirty-two dollars per bushel of wheat. Somewhat higher prices prevail in other provinces, the price varying greatly at different places. For example, wheat was recently twenty-four dollars per bushel in Teheran, while at Hamadan, two hundred and fifty miles distant, the price was forty dollars per bushel. The variation in prices is caused by a total lack of transportation facilities. Recently, in the province of Sistan, not more than six hundred miles from Teheran, wheat was reported to be abundant and selling for one dollar and fifty cents per bushel, while at the same time the price in this city was over twenty dollars per bushel and at some places in the country nearly double this amount."

Even more remarkable was the shortage and high cost of gasoline. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was at least two-thirds owned by the British Government, was producing a vast amount of crude and refined petroleum products, and placing it at the disposal of the British forces. While the British were maintaining an "endless" stream of motor transport in west and east Iran, the price of gasoline in Iran was the equivalent of six dollars per gallon. Caldwell elaborates: "Perhaps the most astounding figures can be cited for the cost of travel. Recently a government official desired to go from here to Isfahan, some three hundred miles. A man was found who was willing to undertake to transport him to Isfahan in an automobile, the price asked being nine hundred tomans; at the present rate of exchange just fifteen hundred dollars, or five dollars per mile. As benzine costs about six dollars per gallon, and would have to be sent on in some manner to different stations for the journey to and from Isfahan, the price is not so outrageous as it may seem." Caldwell continues: "It is practically impossible to travel at all in Persia and those who do travel generally avail themselves of the Russian and British military lorries, though even this is difficult, owing to a lack of passable roads between most points." As to the hapless government employee, Caldwell adds: "Being unable to pay such a price for an automobile the official endeavored to procure a carriage or stage coach to take him to Shiraz, some six hundred miles and was compelled to pay five hundred and fifty tomans (a little over nine hundred dollars) for the hire thereof."[79]

In addition, the British had set about to prevent Iranian trade with the United States, and had prevented the importation of foodstuffs from America at a time when Iran was in the midst of a famine. Caldwell gives

an account of the British interference with American trade and the prevention of the importation of foodstuffs from the United States during the famine. Caldwell writes:

Two examples of British interference in South Persia with American trade may be noted. One case occurred during the war, in August 1917. It had to do with a shipment of three thousand sacks of American sugar, the first shipment of this kind ever brought into this country. A representative of the American firm accompanied the shipment and upon arrival at Bunder Abbas found that all transport animals coming into that port were commandeered by the British and were controlled by them, generally being used in connection with the then newly formed South Persia Rifles. The American in charge went to the British Vice Consul in the city (who practically is in control of the place) and after much discussion it was arranged that if the former could secure transport animals outside of Bunder Abbas they would be allowed to come into the city, load and depart without any molestation from the British military or Vice Consul. The man in charge of the shipment went out of the city about twenty-five miles and was finally able to secure a caravan of three hundred and fifty camels; but the owner, who wished to avoid the commandeering of his animals would not go to the city until he had the fullest assurances that they would not be seized. He received an initial payment for the use of his animals and went to Bunder Abbas—where his caravan was commandeered and used by the military. When the Vice Consul was appealed to he stated that even though he had given his word he could not give any assistance to the American or the owner of the caravan. Therefore the shipment of sugar was forcibly held in Bunder Abbas five or six months and the American declares that meanwhile shipments of sugar by Hindus and British protégés were allowed to be sent inland. The British Vice Consul offered to pay him five hundred tomans (about one thousand dollars) if the shipper would give him a receipt stating that complete compensation had been received, but the Vice Consul was informed that ten thousand dollars would not fully compensate the loss suffered by this company, and the five hundred tomans was refused.

In 1919 this same company again brought a shipment to Persia, this time to Mohammerah, and the representative states that the best freight rate he was able to secure from Bombay to Mohammerah was sixty five rupees

(Rs. 65.) per ton of forty cubic feet, whereas he knows that some British firms were at the same time able to secure a rate of forty-five rupees (Rs. 45) per ton.

Caldwell describes the other case:

The other instance was in Kerman, where the representative of an American rug company was stationed. This man was an Armenian, a Turkish subject, who had been in America two years, long enough to know something of it and to grow to love it better than any other that he knew. He received American papers and magazines and often quoted passages from them in favor of America, and even went so far as to state some times that if America hadn't entered the war the Allies would not have won, and America was therefore the decisive factor and had won the war. The British Consul at Kerman received reports on such matters and put a spy on the trail of the offender. The kargozar, who has local authority over cases where foreign interests are involved with Persian interests was informed that the British Consul was not in favor of this representative of the American company, and every case that came up involving this man or his company was decided in favor of the Persians. It was made so uncomfortable for the Armenian in Kerman that he wished to leave, but he dared not go without getting permission from the British Consul (for fear of being arrested as soon as he got out of the city) so he went to the Consul and asked for permission, whereupon he was asked: "What assurance can you give that you will never come back here again?" The man felt so persecuted that after getting the permission he had requested he actually fled from Kerman, leaving no one in charge of the interests of his firm, and the company has, in consequence, suffered great loss in that district.[80]

## THE FAMINE IN GILAN

In a dispatch dated January 15, 1918, Caldwell encloses contents of letters received from some American missionaries in Iran. One of the enclosures is an extract of a letter from Reverend Charles A. Murray, dated December 28, 1917, describing the conditions in Rasht, Gilan. This important document

establishes the fact that in January 1918, Gilan remained free of famine. Only the refugees from other parts of Iran faced hunger. Murray writes:

The need for relief here, regarding which I wired you, does not arise from local conditions at all, as you inferred. The people who need help are the thousands who are fleeing from destitute homes in the plateau and mountains and villages long distant from Resht. Just now there are two women, one with her husband and three little children in a downstairs room, people we could not refuse to take in. The man and his family come from near Zenjan, their home having been plundered by the two armies that were fighting in that region a year ago. Nothing was left for them to eat, as they came to Resht where they thought rice would be plentiful and cheap. They have absolutely nothing save the rags they wear, and there is no work to be found. The other woman tells this story: She lived in a village four miles from Hamadan, but the Russian soldiers came there to buy or plunder, and there was a fight in which her husband was killed. Their seven camels (her husband was a camel driver and owned his own animals) and everything else were taken from them. She sold her little baby girl for three tomans in order to get a place where it might at least live and to secure something to keep herself alive a few days longer. For some reason, the baby was thrust back upon her. These people seem clean and tidy and are willing to work. The man receives a little pittance of rice from some Mohammedan committee, and we ourselves, as you will understand, are able to help the people very little during this time of high prices and necessity of helping the servants. The baby of the larger family died a few night ago.

Several estimates that there are about 7000 in the city now, having come as far as Zenjan and Hamadan, and even near Tabriz. They are not from the villages near Resht, unless in very small proportion. Reports give it that 4000 are now on their way. It is probable that the above estimates are too large, however this much is true that the takiyeh buildings are all filled at night and all other buildings, stables, hovels etc. that the people can find. The floors of many of these buildings are so covered with people at night that they have no room to lie down to sleep. Great numbers sleep out on the street at night—we see them everywhere—lying in the shelter of a wall or building, with nothing under them, in most cases, except the mud and damp pavement, and nothing over them except a thin quilt or an abba stretched

over four to six people. The Persian secretary to the British Vice-Consul said that in one night, to his knowledge 24 persons died from exposure or hunger or by disease contracted by these. I have heard of two women who gave birth to babies, lying in the street at Sabzi Meidan (the principle square of the city).

The burden might be—I would say could—be borne by the rich of Resht if they were possest of the right spirit. But they are not bearing the burden as they ought, and human beings are suffering and dying, and we in Resht feel that something must be done to relieve the situation.[81]

A letter from E.A. Douglas of the American Hospital in Tehran to Caldwell, dated January 15, 1918, states:

Dr. J.D. Frame, Resht, on Jan. 9th reports "There is still a great deal of suffering in the city but recently the 'Jungle Brothers' (a new political party) who have quietly taken over the whole city government, paying the bills, etc., have organized the best relief measures I have ever seen here and have provided for a large section of the refugees. Little has been done for the sick or to provide proper care for children (infants). In the first place they took over the control of rice, requiring permits for each load that is brought into the city, and forbidding export without permission. Then they apportioned the earlier poor among the well-to-do of the city, and sent some thousands out to the villages to be cared for there. Still the crowds coming in from the mountains, they rented shops, etc. for refugee posts. This for the time being has relieved much suffering, but the people are still dying in large numbers because of their insufficiency of care for the weaker ones. We hope therefore that our recent request for assistance will meet with response.

Very sincerely yours,
*E.A. Douglas*, American Hospital.[82]

The city of Rasht, however, appears to have been initially spared from the "universal oriental dishonesty." Caldwell elaborates: "Resht and the rich province of Mazanderan (the jungle tribes men there, under Kuchik Khan,

are almost independent of the Teheran Government) have established a food-control and have effectively taken hold of the famine conditions existing there. Our committee sent funds to Resht but the American missionaries there returned the money, stating that owing to the effective measures taken by these tribes men our assistance was not needed."[83]

The city of Rasht was not long spared from famine, the efforts of the Jangalis notwithstanding. In June 1918, after the defeat of the Jangalis at Manjil, Rasht was occupied by the British. The attempt by the Jangalis to drive out the British was defeated in late July 1918. By August 1918, Rasht had plunged into a famine. The *Iran* of August 21, 1918, reports on food shortage in Rasht: "Letters coming from Resht relate the extraordinary difficulty of living and the high prices of food stuffs in that city and its vicinity. The price of rice has gone up to sixteen tomans a box and other foods are very scarce. The people, especially the poor, and even a number of the rich, cannot support themselves. However, hope has been revived on account of the recent rainfalls, which it is hoped will make up for the past difficulties and insure a good rice crop. If the disturbed conditions are not renewed and the farmers are not prevented from gathering the harvest, it is likely that conditions will greatly improve soon and the first harvest is expected to be available in about fifteen days." The *Iran* of September 15, 1918, complains of the high cost of rice in Tehran: "During the last week a large quantity of rice has arrived at the Capital, but compared with the quantity brought and the information received about the price of rice in Mazanderan (where it grows) the price of rice in Teheran is still extremely high. Recently the new rice sold in Mazanderan for from fifteen to eighteen tomans for 40 mauns. Although the freight for 100 mauns from Mazanderan to Teheran has been only twenty-five tomans, the price of rice here has not been lower than 132 tomans for 100 mauns. The principal reason for this has been the profiteering of the rice merchants."[84]

The famine in Gilan resulted from British food exports to Baku about which Dunsterville provides much information. In August 1918, the British had sent a force to Baku. In a letter dated August 15, 1918, a British officer, Colonel Key-worth, describes the food shortage at Baku where nothing had been imported for two months, and the oil workers were on the verge of starvation.[85] The blame for this state of affairs is placed on the nationalization of shipping by the Bolsheviks and the "failure of state enterprise."[86] To relieve the famine at Baku, it was decided by the British

that “Our interests will be best served by buying from all possible sources and handing over what we obtain to the local authorities, taking steps to make known what we so hand over.”[87] Iran was the most obvious source of supply for Baku. In no time, the people of Gilan were being deprived of their foodstuffs, including such items as rice, watermelons, and even caviar.[88] Iran was to supply Baku with rice and grain from Gilan and Lenkoran. From Baku, Dunsterville returned to Gilan on August 24, 1918, and he describes the reasons: “to settle up finally with Kuchik Khan, capture everything I could lay hands on in the way of reinforcements, and make arrangements for rice supply from the Gilan country.”[89] Thus Gilan’s rice was being diverted to Baku while Iran, including Gilan, starved. Gilan had even been drained of its honey and its caviar.[90] Dunsterville reports that the British troops had shown little appreciation of the caviar.[91]

The pitiful response of the Iranian government to British food exports from Gilan was to issue a cabinet decree that supposedly “prohibited” the exportation of food from the Caspian regions, and demanded greater vigilance by Iranian customs agents. The matter is described by Caldwell. In a note (No. 1623) dated September 7, 1918, the Foreign Ministry had informed the American legation about a cabinet degree prohibiting the export of food from Iran: “His Persian Majesty’s Foreign Office has the honor to enclose herewith a copy of the honorable Cabinet’s decision in regard to the prohibition of the exportation of all grains and other kinds of food stuffs. You will, of course, announce its contents to the citizens of the great American Government.” The enclosure to note 1623 is a letter from Vossough-ed-Dowleh, the Prime Minister, to the Ministry of Interior, dated August 27, 1918, and it contains the following: “I am in receipt of your letter No. 2417 enquiring about your duty in regard to the decision of the Cabinet regarding the prohibition of the exportation of food stuffs from the coast of the Caspian Sea. In answer I inform you that you should make express recommendations and issue all necessary orders to all the Persian boundaries for the prohibition of the exportation of wheat, barley, rice and all kinds of grain, as well as oxen and sheep. Please inform the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Public Works in order that all necessary measures looking to the enforcement of this order be taken.” In supplying copies of these documents, Caldwell writes: “I have the honor to enclose herewith, as of possible interest to the Department of Commerce and the

War Trade Board, a translation of a note (No. 1623) dated September 7, 1918, from the Persian Foreign Office, announcing the prohibition of the exportation of certain foodstuffs from Persia."[92]

## BRITISH PURCHASE OF FOODSTUFFS IN EASTERN IRAN

Detailed information on British food purchases in the eastern part of Iran is provided by Major-General W.E.R. Dickson, who was an Inspector-General of the "East Persia Cordon," and in charge of procurement of supplies. As noted in chapter two, eastern Iran was occupied by the British and the Russians in the summer of 1915, and the so-called East Persia Cordon was established. With the withdrawal of Russian forces in early 1918, the British advanced to the Russian frontier after occupying Mashhad on March 11, 1918. Dickson adds: "Once also Khorasan was reached the [British] troops were in a country where at all events food for themselves and their animals was procurable, and could be utilized not only for themselves but to be sent back on empty returning transport to the more barren regions of the Cordon. And so they carried on."[93] Dickson stresses that although ammunition and medical supplies had to be brought from India, bread, meat, grain and fodder were "procurable locally, or from Khorasan."[94] At the same time as the Dunsterforce was sent into western Iran, a "military mission," under Major-General Malleson, was sent to Mashhad.[95] The avowed purpose of this force was to counter the expected "Turco-German wave," organize intelligence and local resources in preparation for a larger force that was expected. Dickson adds: "Before there could be any question of sending into North-east Persia anything more than the small force already there, extensive preparations would be needed on the East Persian Cordon to enable it to perform the functions of supplying and maintaining a large force."[96] Repeatedly Dickson states that he had to quickly obtain food supplies for a large British force that was expected to arrive in eastern Iran, and have everything ready for it.[97] He declares that it was his duty as the senior supply officer to "exploit local resources to the fullest extent."[98]

Jumin, the largest village in Gunabad region, located half-way between Qain and Turbat and seat of the deputy-governor, was turned into a collection depot, and served "as a collecting center for supplies obtainable

from the district for backloading on empty returning transport to places further north."[99] At Turbat, Dickson had called on the Persian governor who had tried to convince Dickson that all British grain purchases should be handled by him and that small contractors who "were sons of hell-burnt fathers of the worst kind" should be avoided. Artfully, Dickson had evaded the suggestion.[100] At Khwash another depot had already been established: "Being one of the few fertile spots in this inhospitable region, a post has been established there both with the view of overawing the Sarhadis and collecting the supplies which the region produced."[101] After the armistice in November 1918, Dickson reports that additional British troops had arrived in Iran. Specifically, he states that after the closing of the Constantinople "line of supply" the British forces in Transcaspia had been stationed in Iran, and these forces along with the local levies had to be fed from resources in eastern Iran.[102]

Dickson's detailed account of the acquisition of agricultural products in Sistan and the part played by the British consul in Sistan is particularly revealing: "But that Seistan was able to do so much for us we had to thank Mr. Gould, the British Consul in Seistan, who worked indefatigably in encouraging production, in collecting the produce and having it transported to the line. It is no exaggeration to say that but for Mr. Gould's efforts we should have been on more than one occasion perilously near an absolute break-down. Gould not only arranged contracts with the cultivators for their surplus produce, but also arranged to take over Persian Government grain. In Persia the bulk of the land revenue is paid by agriculturists in kind, and the Government often has difficulty in converting it into cash. Gould arranged to take over this revenue grain on the spot, the Persian Government being paid for it in cash at Teheran, an arrangement that was of great mutual convenience to us and to the Persian Government. He was continuously going round the province exploiting every possible means of augmenting the supply, while his knowledge of and influence over the trading classes enabled very satisfactory arrangements to be made for getting it into the line, with minimum of trouble to us."[103] Dickson also informs on the acquisition of foodstuffs in Khorassan: "Another matter of considerable importance, and one on which Mark Synge was busily engaged, was the exploitation of the resources of Khorasan. If the larger force contemplated were to come to Northeast Persia, it could only be

maintained by obtaining locally the bulky 'agricultural produce' portion of the supplies it would need, and arrangements had to be made in train for this to be done. A special officer had been sent from India to carry out local purchases at Meshed, and he and Mark Synge were engaged incessantly in consultations with the Consul-General and in interviews with the leading local merchants and contractors. Apart from the larger possible contingency, supplies had to be arranged locally for Malleson's force and for back-loading on returning convoys to the parts of the line of communications where they were not obtainable on the spot."[104]

## APPRECIATION OF THE IRANIAN CURRENCY

Large scale British grain purchases also explain the big appreciation in the exchange value of the kran. At the outbreak of the war, one kran was equal 8.75 cents. By 1918, the kran had appreciated 19 cents. In a dispatch dated March 13, 1916, Caldwell reports on the rising exchange rate of the kran: "I have the honor to report that the cost of the Persian toman is at present abnormally high. The Persian silver kran is of the normal value of $0.0875 and the toman therefore of the value of $0.875 but today the Imperial Bank of Persia pays 8 1/2 krans per dollar for draft fifteen days sight on New York, which makes the value of the toman about $1.17 or more than one third higher than normal. But while American dollars are very low, English pounds are even lower, said bank quoting a rate of 40 krans for the pound sterling but not buying at any rate. Most of the drafts for salary and contingent expenses of this legation have therefore been negotiated with private parties when a slightly better rate could thus be obtained." Caldwell adds: "The causes of this extraordinary condition is attributed to various causes: the English bank here and its branches throughout Persia claiming that the presence of something over one hundred thousand Russian troops in different parts of Persia has created an abnormal demand for the silver kran, which has thus grown scarce, while others claim that the said Imperial Bank of Persia have a practical monopoly in the matter of buying and selling foreign drafts and exchange and being about to consummate a loan in pounds sterling to the Persian Government, which said loan is to be repaid in Persian coin, are desirous of forcing the value of the pound as low as possible and therefore the toman as high as possible, so as to part with as small an amount of money as possible."[105] By January 1917, the kran

exchange rate had risen even more. In a dispatch dated January 6, 1917, Caldwell reports on the appreciation of the kran: “I have the honor to submit that the existing rate of exchange of all foreign moneys into Persian money is something most extraordinary. The present rate at which we are compelled to sell dollars is about four and nine-tenths (4-9/10) krans, and every indication points to an even lower rate. This makes the American dollar worth about forty-two cents (42 cents) at this time. The rate for pound sterling is twenty-four (24) krans, which makes its comparative value about the same as the dollar.”[106]

In November 1918 when World War I ended, the exchange rate remained high. Caldwell comments: “The exchange value of the kran has more than doubled since the outbreak of the war. The gold dollar, which is normally worth 11.43 krans is now worth but 5.50 krans and has recently been as low as 5.20. During the last quarter the value of the kran fluctuated from 5.20 to 5.60 or a difference of 9%.” There had been a sharp decline in Iran’s visible foreign trade while its currency appreciated: “The foreign trade of Persia is at present in a very unfavorable state. Since the war trade in north Persia, which was for the most part carried on with Russia, has been nearly at a standstill. Trade in the South has increased perhaps to some extent but taken as a whole the trade of Persia during the war has been reduced by over a third and during the last year the volume of trade has been only about one half of what it was before the war.” Caldwell adds that although trade in the south may have increased somewhat from what it was in the previous dismal year of 1917, “the greatest boon to Persia has been the abnormally high rate of exchange requiring only half the normal amount of krans to pay for merchandize purchased abroad.”[107] With imports and exports so greatly reduced, the appreciation of the kran, it is clear, was due to large scale “military expenditures” by the British which in practice meant large scale purchase of foodstuffs. It is interesting that the appreciation of the kran was seen as caused by a shortage of silver. As seen by the contemporaries, Iran was on a silver standard. The increased demand for silver by the British army caused a scarcity of silver, raising its price and thus resulting in an exchange appreciation of the kran. Caldwell explains: “At the present moment there is a rather acute stringency of silver coinage in Persia. This is due in great measure to the presence of the British army which requires a great deal of the metal to pay its troops and to pay for the supplies it is purchasing locally. Furthermore this is the time of moving the

crops when a great deal of money has to be sent into country districts, for that purpose, which does not come back into circulation until the crops are all in and the farmers begin to come to the towns to purchase their winter supplies."[108] The silver shortage had continued. White reports: "the silver metal is still scarce in spite of the fact that it is no longer being sent into the country districts to move the crops. The presence of a large British force in Persia is thought to be largely responsible for this situation."[109] Large British purchases, resulting high prices and the anticipation of even higher prices encouraged landowners to hoard grain. One such landowner had been Ahmad Shah himself. A described in the next chapter, Southard paints a very unflattering picture of Ahmad Shah as a youth motivated by greed and lack of compassion.[110]

Dickson's discussion of financial matters is extremely informative and provides insight on the manner in which British purchase of foodstuffs resulted in the appreciation of the value of the kran.[111] He states that with the appreciation of the Persian currency, Indian rupees were cheaper at the post office than at the local branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia.[112] The reason was that the bank fixed the rupee-kran exchange rate at the average rate prevailing the previous month. While the post office rate (wire transfers to and from India) was on the current rate. With kran appreciating continuously, opportunities for arbitrage were created: "Some ingenious individuals discovered that this provided an admirable and simple means of 'getting rich quick.'" The British had quickly put a stop to the practice.[113] By May 1918, Dunsterville reports that the "supply question" had been resolved. But another problem had arisen, difficulty in getting Persian money to pay for the purchases of grain and foodstuffs: "The supply question was no longer acute. But another fresh trouble occurred in the shape of a money famine. The actual currency in Persia is not very extensive and our demands were now very large."[114] The problem had been solved thanks to the "miracles" achieved by McMurray, chief of the Imperial Bank of Persia, not to mention the continuous appreciation of the kran.

## IRANIAN GOVERNMENT NOTES ON BRITISH GRAIN PURCHASES

The Iranian government had no doubt that the purchase of foodstuff by the British had caused famine in Iran. In a diplomatic note (No. 177) dated October 5, 1918, the Iranian minister in Washington, Mirza Ali-Kuli Khan, Nabil-ed-Dowleh, had enclosed a translation of the recent communication with the Iranian foreign office. Nabil-ed-Dowleh writes: "I have the honor to submit for the information of your Government translations of recent communications received from the Persian Government, pertaining to the occupation of Persian territory by the troops of the belligerent powers, which, in violating the neutrality of Persia, has resulted in offending the public feeling, and provoking a desperate situation, of which the ravaging famine is but one aspect. In presenting the enclosed data, I beg to state that Persia looks to America to insure her, after the war, against a recurrence of such hopeless conditions, which have afflicted the people of this ancient land. We have full confidence that the great principles of humanity and justice enunciated by your Government will in the day of peace extend their blessings towards Persia, as one of the countries which has endured long years of manifold trials with patience and long suffering." One enclosure is a telegram from the Iranian foreign ministry to the Iranian legation in London (no date given, but most likely, March-April, 1918). It contains the following: "The British Legation has not changed its policy and is by no means favorable. The British are introducing forces and equipments into the different parts of the East and West Persia, and pay no heed to the protests of our Government. The British officials in most parts of the Country are busy making advance purchases of grain. This process increases the hardships from which the Persian people are suffering, due to the acts of the belligerent countries on Persian territory. The various calamities of the people, including the famine from which large multitudes are dying daily, are due to such foreign aggression. It is obvious how people view such acts of the British… If the British occupation continues, it will again make Persia a theatre of the war and provoke terrible conditions, especially in the year of the famine and drought." Another enclosure that was submitted to the State Department by Nabil-ed-Dowleh is a translation of the declaration of the "Committee for Public Indignation" that was put out on March 19, 1918. On March 11, 1918, the British legation had handed a note to the Iranian government in which it had informed the Iranian government that British forces were about to invade western Iran, and had demanded that the South Persia Rifles be formally recognized by the Persian government. In

response, “The Committee of Public Indignation,” in its meeting of March 19, 1918, had put out a declaration in which the British grain purchases are blamed for the famine. It states: “Furthermore, by buying up and cornering the foodstuffs in Persia, the British Government has subjected Persia to dire famine and scarcity.”[115]

Hostility to the British ran deep. The *Nobahar* of March 10, 1918 (No. 107) had reported on the complaints of the people of Qum against the officials of a British concern, the Lynch Transport Company. Forty one members of the Democratic Party of Qum had written to the government in Tehran about the extortion and injustice against travelers and pilgrims committed by the latter company. In the fall of 1915 when clashes had taken place between the Russian army and the Iranian gendarmes near Qum, the government had ordered that 500 tomans be paid to the gendarmerie from the proceeds of the road tax, a concession held by the company. Lynch had raised the road toll to pay the 500 tomans but then had continued to charge a higher tax for thirty months. The complaint was that having paid 500 tomans, it had collected 50,000 tomans from travelers and pilgrims. The petitioners had demanded an investigation into the practices of the company and immediate relief.

## IMPOSITION OF “FOOD CONTROL”

A belated response of the Iranian government to the food crisis was to impose “food control.” Such a measure was not only ineffective, it was positively harmful. A very interesting aspect of the affair was to shift the blame on the domestic food producers, and thus deflect blame from the British. On September 13, 1918, Caldwell telegraphs: “Food control has been established in Persia with a Belgian customs officer in charge.” He also adds: “Exportation [of] grain cattle sheep etc. from Persia is prohibited.”[116] It turns out that “food control” was confined solely to Tehran province. Caldwell reports: “I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy, in translation, of a note (No. 223/39) from the Foreign Office under the date of the 23rd instant, enclosing the regulations published by M. Molitor, the Food Controller, in regard to the purchase and movement of grain in Teheran Province.”[117] The announcement is signed by Lambert Molitor, Food Controller and Superintendent of the Royal holdings, and is dated October 6, 1918 (Mizan 13, 1336), contains the following regulations:

In furtherance of the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers on the 14th of Zi Hajeb 1336 (September 21, 1918) numbered 1127 and published in the paper "Iran," the Food controller established the following articles:

1. The Government appropriates all the wheat raised in the province of Teheran to the use of the capital, except the amount used for planting and the yearly supply of the farmers and proprietors.
2. Transportation of wheat from Teheran and its environs is strictly prohibited.
3. Buying and selling of wheat in the way of merchandizing is not allowed.
4. Only the Government can buy wheat.
5. Those who obstruct the carrying out of the measures in regard to the food control and disobeying the food regulations will be punished in accordance with the separate articles approved by the Cabinet.

Details of the regulations are given, the most important of which includes the following: "As has been set forth in the former announcement if any attempt be made to export wheat and barley from the Province of Teheran, the wheat and barley, if belonging to the Province of Teheran will be confiscated. In order to accomplish this end a special force has been authorized to prevent the exportation of wheat and barley out of the Province of Teheran. Transportation of wheat and barley inside the province, for sowing for example, will be unrestricted. People who own houses and who have bought wheat and barley in the neighborhood of Teheran before the publishing of this announcement are given the chance to bring to Teheran that which they have bought before October 14, 1918 (Aghrab 1, 1337). In case they do not bring in their wheat before this time, they will no more have the permission to bring it, and it will be bought by the Government. But proprietors can bring to Teheran wheat and barley enough for their yearly use if according to the usual rule they get permission before hand from the Food Department and take their wheat and barley to their own houses after they have passed the control of the said Department. Those people who desire to get their wheat and barley from outside the Province of Teheran will be free to do so provided they have their 'barnameh' (the bill of lading) signed by the Finance officer of the place from which the barley and wheat is bought, in order to show that the

goods have been bought outside the Province; and as a rule, the owners must get passes from the Department of the Food Controller before they bring their wheat or barley to Teheran."

The announcement adds: "The wheat and barley used for speculation or trade will be taken by the Government." Grain owners had two months from the date of the notice to inform the government of the amount and location of grain held: "After this time has expired the Government officials will forcibly take enough grain from the owners to supply the public needs." It also states: "If those people who have hidden their grain before the publication of this announcement come personally to the Food Department and inform the officers in charge of food about their grain, they will not be interfered with; their grain will be treated in accordance with the provisions of this announcement." That is it will be forcibly purchased at government prices. It concludes with a threat: "All those who attempt to oppose the measures taken by the Government officials in commandeering the grain stores of any place, will be considered as people who refuse obedience to the rules of the Government and take measures against the facilitation of public food; and therefore will be punished in accordance with the fourth article of the decision of the Cabinet dated September 21, 1918 and numbered 1127." The final threat is directed at landowners: "In addition to the fact that all those people who directly oppose the acts of the Government will be punished, and the Government will pursue grain proprietors and local supervisers who encourage opposition." These regulations did not and could not deal with the real shortage of food. It appears that the primary intent of the regulation was to portray the famine as caused by "hoarding" and speculation by landowners and merchants.

One of the landowners who had gained an unenviable reputation as a heartless and greedy youth was Ahmad Shah. Southard describes a particularly disturbing incident involving Ahmad Shah and grain sales right in the middle of the famine: "The Shah of Persia is a young man who is represented as being exceedingly fond of money by the people who know him, and his intimate friends and supporters say that he takes the attitude that he is probably the last Shah which Persia will have, and that he should make as much money as he can before he loses the throne. As an instance of the Shah's desire to acquire wealth by any possible means I repeat the following which was told me confidentially by one Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh, a very prominent politician and business man in Teheran who is

stated by Mr. Shuster in his book to be the only honest man in Persia." Southard describes the incident involving Ahmad Shah and his wheat: "This man is a member of the relief commission in Teheran which last winter expended considerable sums of American relief money. He was commissioned to buy wheat for this committee and knowing that the Shah held considerable quantities he called up the Shah's business manager and inquired. The business manager said the Shah held some wheat which he would sell for ninety tomans a kharvar (a toman equals about $2.00 at present exchange rates and a kharvar is 650 pounds). Mr. Kaikhosrow said that he would take a certain number of kharvars at that price and would be over later with the sale papers and the money. A little later the Shah's representative called up and said that he had seen the Shah who now decided that he must have 95 tomans a kharvar for his wheat. Mr. Kaikhosrow again agreed, knowing of no other place to get wheat for the starving Persians in Teheran. Finally, before he arrived at the palace to close the deal he was again called by the Shah's representative who said that the Shah in thinking further of the matter had decided that he wouldn't sell under 100 tomans per kharvar, the Shah knowing all the time that the grain was to feed his own starving subjects and would probably be bought at any price by the committee. When Mr. Kaikhosrow finally arrived at the palace the Shah had decided not to sell his wheat at all, preferring to wait until later when the price would certainly be higher."[118] The subject is also mentioned in the memoirs of Amidi-Nouri who writes: "Tehran was being burned by a strange famine, and the people were terrified. Crops around Tehran were poor that year and the bakeries hardly functioned. Wheat was costing two hundred tomans a kharvar, and it was well-known that Ahmad Shah had stored his wheat and was selling it at 200 tomans a kharvar. He was nicknamed Ahmad the Merchant."[119]

## AMERICAN RELIEF EFFORT IN IRAN

In a dispatch of May 21, 1918, Caldwell informs on the relief work being carried out in central Iran: "I have the honor to submit the following facts, figures and data on the famine relief work now being carried on throughout Central Persia and administered by a committee known as the 'Persian Relief Committee,' made up of local American missionaries and prominent Persians, of which committee the undersigned has the honor to be

chairman… The entire funds received for the relief work in this part of Persia have been sent from America and up to the present have amounted to four hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars, and more will no doubt be received later. Considerably more than half of this has been spent in Teheran, where more than thirty thousand people are being fed each week. Similar work is being carried on under the auspices of American missionaries at Meshed, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kazvin, Resht and Sultanabad. At the first two named places the relief work is quite extensive, something like nine thousand persons being fed daily." Caldwell adds: "Our committee here has adopted the name of 'Persian Relief Committee.' Teheran has been divided into nine centers of distribution, from whence money, rice and foodstuffs are given out on tickets, the holders of which have been previously carefully investigated as to their neediness. Notwithstanding the fact that this committee is feeding about thirty thousand people in Teheran, reliable figures show that there about seventy-five thousand additional in this city alone who are in as great need as those receiving aid, and many of these needy die of starvation." These numbers are truly staggering. Thirty thousand were being fed, and an additional seventy-five thousand were in dire need. That is one-third of the population of Tehran was starving. Caldwell adds: "However, owing to the almost universal oriental dishonesty, our investigators report numerous impostors and frequent impositions on the committee."

Caldwell compares the magnitude of the American relief effort with the token measures taken by the British: "The Department is doubtless aware of the details of the relief work on a vast scale that has been done during the last three years in North-west Persia, where over two million American dollars have been donated and spent. The British military authorities at Kermanshah and Hamadan are doing relief work by employing labor in the construction of roads leading toward Bagdad, and in Teheran a British association has been feeding about one thousand people daily, but aside from this and the relief work carried on with the money received from America there is very little aid being extended to these people who are in the direst need. So far as is known no foreign relief work is being carried on by foreigners [British] in the Southern part of Persia, in such places as Kashan, Yezd, Kerman, Shiraz, etc., where conditions similar to those in Teheran prevail." Caldwell also adds: "It might be possible to distribute American funds in those places, for while there are no Americans

there are large numbers of British troops, missionaries, officials and subjects, but it is most difficult to find local Persian inhabitants who are trustworthy and competent to carry on the work."[120]

In a dispatch of September 5, 1918, Southard also describes the purpose of the famine relief work at Kermanshah: "The famine and distress along the line on both sides of Kermanshah was, of course, an obstacle to the freer movement and progress of the military forces and steps were taken to improve this condition by getting British Government funds with which to feed the starving people, pay them for labor required in road-building, and to construct shelters for those who had been left without such by the destruction credited to the Russian forces which had recently retired in the direction of the Caspian." Southard describes the cooperation of W.F. Stead and his wife in the relief work and in the construction of military roads: "I understand that Mr. W.F. Stead and Dr. Stead, his wife, who are the American missionaries in charge at Kermanshah, volunteered to assist in this work, and that due to his intimate knowledge of the local conditions as well as his evidently practical knowledge of construction work, Mr. Stead was able to supervise a great deal of the road-building work and the construction of shelters for the workers and famine victims in the vicinity of Kermanshah, using British Government funds allotted for the purpose. His wife, Dr. Stead, took charge of many of the starving children gathered up by the British along the road and was able to restore a number of them to strength and health."[121]

In his report entitled, "Summary of the Present Situation in Persia," cited in chapter 3, C.C. Batchelder writes: "The British and American missionaries are evidently doing their best to alleviate the wide-spread distress, as far as their funds and supplies, at their disposal admit. Nos. 1583-84-85-86. One missionary is feeding nearly four thousand starving people, and is obliged to turn away crowds daily. Lady Marling, the wife of the British Minister, is conducting a soup kitchen with funds contributed by the foreign community, and supplies about 2300 meals per day, which are issued to the people who have been investigated and given tickets. A Persian relief committee has been formed comprising among its members, the United States Minister to Persia, various members of the Legations, a number of missionaries, the Governor of Teheran, and a number of Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament. 'A number of these Persian committees are doing a limited amount of relief, and the Government has

collected some 3000 of the homeless poor, and is caring for them in two places in the suburbs; one for the men and one for the women. They have also opened soup kitchens throughout the city, where they sell a sort of rice stew, which is passably good food, at about half the real cost—one pound for 4 cents. Tickets for this stew can be bought, and they are favorite means of helping hungry people.' There is no limit to the amount of relief money which could be spent to advantage. Applicants have to be turned down constantly, and hundreds are not being reached, especially the petty tradesmen and laborers who are too proud to confess their wretchedness.

"Mr. C.A. Douglas devoted himself heart and soul to relief work, but died of typhus fever, contracted during visits to the houses of the destitute, and Mrs. Douglas and the servant who accompanied him on his visits barely recovered. One of the most interesting features of the whole situation is the way in which Mr. and Mrs. Douglas organized the relief work. A small amount of money was made available, but there were too few foreigners to administer systematic relief. 'The young men of the high school were the solution to the problem. Previous to this time, a number of students of both schools and some of the teachers had been assisting. Now we decided to free the senior class for a time from all their lessons, in order that they may make a thorough canvass of the city. The boys responded magnificently. The city was districted and investigators appointed for the various quarters and the sub-divisions of the same. The conditions they found were appalling. People had been gradually selling their household goods and living on the proceeds, and now they had nothing to sell, and literally thousands of families were absolutely destitute. By the help of the boys we were able to extend our work to nine centers including 5000 families, which is about the limit we have set for ourselves, though per force we are compelled to keep adding. Two of our boys have visited about 500 families. Part of the money was received from London and we gave them a grant of Ts. 2000 of the $265,000. We have sent $20,000 to Meshed, $14,000 to Hamadan, $3,500 to Kermanshah, $250 each to Kazvin and Resht, and various outlying districts have been helped. A center that is felt to be certainly one of the best forms of relief work is the work of the college grounds where about 280 men were employed at a fair wage (i.e. fair for former times) are given their luncheons and rice on Saturday nights, according to the number in the family. Roads are being built, football and running tracks graded, and now a double college dormitory to accommodate

seventy to eighty boys, and a residence are being built. We hope to have both buildings completed by the middle of June, when we plan to discontinue relief work. At first we called this center "the sieve" as it effectually separated the lazy ones from the ones who were willing to work. The sifting process is fast becoming a thing of the past, and "the bee-hive" would seem to be more correct. The work of the distribution is so systemized that it requires a minimum time. It takes place in all the centers Friday mornings, as that is school holiday. The people are given both money and rice at the rate of 250 to 280 per hour, and a record is kept.'

"We do not feel that the education of the boys has been neglected by the omission of regular school lessons. This work is a course in sociology, and social service such as could never be equaled by any mere class-room course. Then too, what system and thorough organization can effect, has been a revelation to the boys, as well as the Persians in general, and we feel that if our boys can apply, in after life, the lessons of the service and helpfulness, thoroughness and efficiency and attention to detail; i.e. applied Christianity, they will prove a mighty power in bringing the New Persia. I am enclosing a translation of an article written by one of the boys and published in the papers of Teheran, which seems to us just what the committee would want in the way of information. I do not need to explain that it was not shown to any of the missionaries before it was published. If it had been, we doubtless would have toned it down in spots. No. 1585.

"We entered another house. At first they abused us, and said, 'The Government has sent many times and made census, and except the resulting dearness in the price of food, there has been no result. Now it is better that you be ashamed of yourselves before God, and cease to sprinkle salt on our open wounds.' But when we explained that we were not agents of the Government, but that we were sent by a committee of Americans, who were lovers of their kind, one woman, rising in the midst of them said, 'Are you Angels disguised as men who have come into this pit to deliver our souls? They say that the Farangees (Christians) are bad—that the Farangees are blasphemers. Are our nobles Moslems? Is there one atom of the zeal of the Farangees to be found in any of our rulers? Oh God, since we are unable to do anything, do Thou Thyself give these Farangees their reward, and to our grandees the punishment they deserve. No. 1585."[122]

## AMERICAN RELIEF AID TO JEWS

On May 7, 1918, Albert Lucas, secretary of the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers, wrote to the State Department quoting from two cables received from Persia. The first from Tehran states: "Fifty thousand needy Persian Jews fifteen thousand starving will you assist." The other from Hamadan: "Terrible famine. Have pity on our community. Please help ten thousand Israelites without bread." Lucas had requested the State Department for information on the status of the Jews in Persia.[123] In response to State Department instruction of May 10th, Caldwell responds on May 13th: "Needy Jews in Persia estimated thirty to forty thousand of which probably twenty-five per cent are starving and in dire need."[124] In a dispatch dated June 18, 1918, and entitled, "American Relief Fund for Persian Jews," Caldwell reports on the distribution of $15,000 sent to Persia by American Jews for help to Persian Jews: "I have the honor to confirm reception of the Department's telegram No. 60, of May 29th advising that a Jewish Relief Committee had deposited fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000.00) and authorizing the undersigned to draw for this sum. Accordingly, on the 4th instant, the said fifteen thousand dollars was sold to the Imperial Bank of Persia at the rate of six and one eighth (6-1/8) krans per dollar, telegraphic, less the cost of the cable. The fifteen thousand dollars thus netted ninety one thousand four hundred and seventy five (91,475) krans, as shown by the attached credit note from said bank." Caldwell then describes the use of the money: "In further compliance with said cable instruction, a committee composed of fifteen of the leading Jews and members of Jewish societies of Teheran were assembled together and organized into a Jewish Relief Committee, with the undersigned as Chairman. On June 5th the proceeds of the fifteen thousand dollars were turned over, as shown by the attached receipt, to B. Khodadah, a banker of Teheran who had been duly elected as Treasurer of said committee. Of this money thirty thousand (30,000) krans was spent in Teheran and the balance sent to different localities throughout Persia where most needed. Something like six hundred (600) needy families were assisted with the thirty thousand krans spent in Teheran."[125] In a dispatch dated September 7, 1918, Caldwell reports on another transfer, this time $10,000: "I have the honor to acknowledge the Department's cablegram No. 74 of August 10, 1918 advising that the Joint Distribution Committee of Philadelphia (also known, I believe, under the name of American Jewish Relief Committee) had deposited with the Department $10,000 for the relief

of Jewish distress in Persia and authorizing the undersigned to draw for the same. This will be done in the near future." As to the use of the initial $15,000, Caldwell adds: "It is believed that this money has been wisely and economically expended and has contributed very much to relieving the very distressing conditions of last winter and spring. The local Jewish Relief Committee of Teheran, of which I am Honorary Chairman, desires to extend its sincere thanks and express its gratitude to the donors of both the above mentioned funds."[126] In a dispatch dated November 25, 1918, Caldwell describes the conversion and use of the money: "I beg to confirm my telegram No. 29 of October 31st advising the Department that the above mentioned ten thousand dollars had been sold to one Habibollah Isfahani who requested that the Department deposit the same to the credit of his interest account in the National City Bank, New York… The proceeds, five thousand six hundred and fifty tomans were turned over to the local committee, composed of the most prominent Jews in Teheran, who are distributing the same as they distributed the fifteen thousand dollars contributed by the same Joint Distribution Committee last spring." Caldwell concludes: "The Jews of Teheran desire to express their most grateful thanks to the Department of State and to the senders of these funds for their great kindness. I may personally add that the funds were well distributed and did an immense amount of good."[127] Finally, in December 1919, the Joint Distribution Committee had deposited a final $10,000 with the State Department for transfer to Persia and for use to relieve Jewish suffering. Caldwell reports: "In accordance with these advices, this deposit has this day been transferred here, by exchange at the rate of 5 krans to the dollar, and I have this day cabled to the Department to deposit this sum in the Guaranty Trust Company of New York to the credit of Yaganegan. The purchaser, Yaganegan, is a Parsee firm here, and by a private sale to them I have been able to obtain for this draft nearly two thousand dollars more than the Imperial Bank here would have paid. Herewith is a copy of the receipt obtained from the local Jewish distributing committee of Teheran, to whom this money was turned over for distribution among the poor."[128]

## NOTES

1. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, Vol. 6, p. 4777, cited in Abadian, p. 197.
2. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, Vol. 7, p. 4904, cited in Abadian, p. 226.

3. Moberly, F.J. *The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918 Volumes I*, *II*, *III* and *IV.* London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1923-1927.

4. Moberly, *Volume III*, p. 255.

5. Moberly, *Volume III*, p. 368.

6. Heizer, dispatch 66 and enclosures, 867.01/1, October 13, 1917.

7. Heizer, dispatch 125 and enclosures, 867.85/-, September 6, 1918.

8. Heizer, letter, PR Bagdad, file 000, October 3, 1917.

9. Moberly, *Volume IV*, p. 39.

10. Dickson to Heizer, letter, Post Records, Baghdad, file 845, August 30, 1917.

11. Moberly, *Volume IV*, pp. 88-89.

12. Moberly, *Volume IV*, p. 257.

13. Moberly, *Volume IV*, pp. 168-169.

14. Moberly, *Volume IV*, pp. 187-188.

15. Moberly, *Volume IV*, pp. 189-190.

16. Moberly, *Volume IV*, p. 192.

17. Moberly, *Volume IV*, p. 213.

18. Moberly, *Volume IV*, p. 255.

19. Southard, telegram, 891.00/1010, August 30, 1918.

20. Southard, dispatch 11, 891.00/1046, September 6, 1918.

21. Caldwell, press dispatch and enclosures, 891.00/1084, October 26, 1918.

22. Southard, telegram, 763.72/10714, July 16, 1918.

23. Southard, telegram, 891.00/999, August 14, 1918.

24. Caldwell, telegram 14, 891.00/1030, October 1, 1918.

25. White, Quarterly Report No. 2, 891.00/1088, January 10, 1919.

26. Marshall, *Memories*, pp. 303-306.

27. Marshall, *Memories*, p. 306.

28. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 62.

29. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 64-65.

30. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 65.

31. Southard, dispatch 1, 891.00/1054, September 2, 1918.

32. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 123-124.

33. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 135.

34. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 76.

35. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 94-96.

36. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 113-114.

37. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 124.
38. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 144.
39. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 140-143.
40. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 145.
41. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 150-151.
42. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 161-162.
43. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 182.
44. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 188.
45. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 189-190.
46. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 235.
47. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 238-239.
48. Heizer, dispatch 92 and enclosures, 891.00/978, April 27, 1918.
49. Caldwell, dispatch 385 and enclosure, 891.00/1008, May 13, 1918.
50. The *Raad* of April 21, 1915, 763.72111/2276.
51. Caldwell, dispatch, 891.00/920, October 4, 1917.
52. Sykes, *History of Persia*, p. 459.
53. Sykes, *History of Persia*, p. 466.
54. Sykes, *History of Persia,* p. 472.
55. Sykes, *History of Persia*, p. 477.
56. Sykes, *History of Persia*, pp. 480-481.
57. Sykes, *History of Persia*, pp. 486-487.
58. Sykes, *History of Persia*, pp. 473-474.
59. Caldwell, dispatch 385 and enclosure, 891.00/1008, May 13, 1918.
60. Heizer, dispatch 66 and enclosures, 867.01/1, October 14, 1917. On August 8, 1917, the above ban was lifted. Proclamation No. 21 reads in part: "The Prohibition of the export of Krans from Baghdad by land or water published in my proclamation No. 17, dated 9th day of June, is hereby withdrawn."
61. Heizer, letter, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, September 14, 1917.
62. Dickson, letter, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, September 25, 1917.
63. Heizer, letter, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, October 4, 1917.
64. Reed, letter, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, October 11, 1917.

65. Heizer, dispatch 65, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, October 9, 1917.

66. Heizer, dispatch 77, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 690, November 27, 1917.

67. Heizer, dispatch 92 and enclosures, 891.00/978, April 27, 1918.

68. Heizer, letter, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 660, April 23, 1918.

69. Consular Post Records, Bagdad, files 660, 498, April 25, 1918.

70. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 610, August 5, 1918.

71. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 610, November 5, 1918.

72. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 800, June 11, 1917.

73. Heizer, dispatch 81, 763.72/9214, December 17, 1917.

74. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 861.3, February 28, 1918.

75. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 861.3, May 16, 1918.

76. Heizer, report, Consular Post Records, Bagdad, file 861.3, June 25, 1918.

77. Southard to Vickery, letter and memorandum, 891.48/127, December 24, 1918.

78. Southard, dispatch 1, 891.00/1054, September 2, 1918.

79. Caldwell, dispatch 379, 891.50/-, April 29, 1918.

80. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 6, 891.00/1148, January 9, 1920.

81. Caldwell, dispatch 353 and enclosures, 891.48/59, January 15, 1918.

82. Caldwell, dispatch 353 and enclosures, 891.48/59, January 15, 1918.

83. Caldwell, dispatch 390, 891.48/111, May 21, 1918.

84. Caldwell, press dispatch and enclosures, 891.00/1084, October 26, 1918.

85. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 224-225.

86. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 245.

87. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 248.

88. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 249-250.

89. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 251-255.
90. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 267.
91. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 268.
92. Caldwell, dispatch 446 and enclosures, 600.919/3, September 11, 1918.
93. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 54-55.
94. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 63.
95. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 58.
96. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 64-65.
97. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 68.
98. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 142.
99. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 162-163.
100. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 166-167.
101. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 78.
102. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 218.
103. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 143-146.
104. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 174-175.
105. Caldwell, dispatch 144, 891.5151, March 13, 1916.
106. Caldwell, dispatch 269, 891.5151/1, January 6, 1917.
107. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.
108. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.
109. White, Quarterly Report No. 3, 891.00/1096, April 4, 1919.
110. Southard, dispatch 3, 891.00/1048, September 3, 1918.
111. Dickson, *East Persia*, pp. 152-153.
112. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 156.
113. Dickson, *East Persia*, p. 156.
114. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 177-178.
115. Nabil-ed-Dowleh to Lansing, note 177 and enclosures, 763.72111/7190, October 5, 1918.
116. Caldwell, telegram, 691.00/8, September 13, 1918.
117. Caldwell, dispatch 461 and enclosure, 691.00/9, October 28, 1918.
118. Southard, dispatch 3, 891.00/1048, September 3, 1918.
119. Amidi-Nouri, *Diaries of a Journalist*, p. 37.
120. Caldwell, dispatch 390, 891.48/111, May 21, 1918.

121. Southard, dispatch 9, 391.116/134, September 5, 1918.

122. Frayser, Military Intelligence Division, file 11004-4, October 15, 1918.

123. Lucas to Secretary of State, letter, 891.48/45, May 7, 1918.

124. Caldwell, telegram, 891.48/48, May 13, 1918.

125. Caldwell, dispatch 404, 891.48/106, June 14, 1918.

126. Caldwell, dispatch 440, 891.48/120, September 7, 1918.

127. Caldwell, dispatch 465, 891.48/131, November 25, 1918.

128. Caldwell, dispatch 571, 891.48/194, May 4, 1920.

## *Chapter Six*

# The Financial Strangulation

The financial condition of the Iranian government deteriorated rapidly after the outbreak of the war. In a dispatch dated October 7, 1914, Caldwell reports on the initial impact of the war on government finances: "I have the honor to report Persian finances as in bad condition. European war stopped all income from import and export duty, and the government is reported as bankrupt. However the soon to be convened Medjless may find a way out of the difficulty."[1] Parliament was convened on December 5, 1914, but was powerless to provide relief. As noted in chapter two, on February 1, 1915, the Russians occupied Tabriz, while the British occupied Ahwaz. Anxious to exert a show of authority in Azerbaijan, the Iranian government desired to send the heir apparent to the throne to Tabriz where, traditionally, the same acted as governor-general of the province. But the government lacked the necessary funds to send the Crown Prince. In a dispatch of April 7, 1915, Caldwell quotes the *Ershad* of February 7, 1915: "The people of Isphahan are ready to advance one-third of the revenue of coming year to the Government for starting the Crown Prince to Azarbayejan as governor, but are not ready to advance it to the Belgian officials of the Treasury." In the same dispatch, Caldwell refers to an article in the March 2, 1915, issue of *The Christian Science Monitor*. Citing an unnamed source in London, the paper declares: "The root difficulty with Persia is of course the great financial question… As far as the government is concerned it is not only the difficulty of collecting taxes, but much more the difficulty of securing any justice in their expenditure when they are collected." In commenting on the article, Caldwell states: "I should add that there is some doubt as to the entire impartiality and truth of the statements."[2] The financial difficulties of the government were also aggravated by the fact that after the outbreak of the war, many refused to accept paper money. In a dispatch of May 19, 1915, just two days after the murder of the Russian consul in Isfahan,

Caldwell provides a glimpse at the economic conditions as indicated by refusal to accept paper money and the acute shortage of silver: “Though the Medjliss has passed the law asked for by the English Bank, making it misdemeanor for anyone to refuse payment of an obligation in bank notes, such can not be negotiated at their full value, and as gold is unobtainable and silver is very scarce. It is difficult therefore for even the legations to meet their expenses.”[3]

## PROPOSAL TO SELL OR PAWN THE CROWN JEWELS

Desperate for money, the Iranian government had even contemplated the sale of the crown jewels or their use as collateral for an American loan. In a dispatch of October 7, 1914, Caldwell writes: “The Persian government possesses a vast amount of precious stones, mostly pearls, but also diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds value estimated at $30,000,000 which they hope to dispose of in the United States. An income tax is also being talked, as well as a war tax on many commodities.”[4] The matter was not immediately pursued by the Iranian government because of a “moratorium agreement” with Russia and Great Britain in January 1915, below described. By the fall of 1915, it had become clear that the “moratorium” and the associated demand for a “financial commission”, was unlikely to rescue the Iranian government, and with the onset of successive Russian invasions, the Iranian government had again considered using the crown jewels to escape the grim financial situation and the resultant Russian-British control. On September 10, 1915, about the time of the first large scale Russian troop landings at Enzeli, Caldwell telegraphs: “Confidential. The Government of Persia hope to obtain immediate loan ten to twenty million dollars. Several of the belligerent European powers reputed willing to make the loan but the Government of Persia would prefer to procure money from the United States of America. Persian Government possesses jewels consisting of pearls, diamonds, emeralds, et cetera. Recent inventory shows the value of the same is about thirty five million. Would be willing to pledge or to sell if required. Matter worth serious attention and must be handled quietly and confidentially. Government of Persia ask that the Department of State advise by cable outlook for public or private loan.”[5] On September 14, 1915, the matter had been brought to the attention of the Departments of Commerce and Treasury, and on October 1, 1915,

F.Q. Brown of the banking house of Redmond and Company of New York had expressed an interest. In a dispatch dated September 21, 1915, Caldwell provides additional details on the affair: “On the 9th day of September 1915 a conference was held by His Majesty, the Shah; Arbab Kaikhoosro, the leader of the Persian Medjliss, or Congress; and Mostafiol-Momalek, the Prime Minister and a discussion was had as to raising money to meet the current expenses of the Persian Government. It was thereupon agreed among the three mentioned that before accepting the proffered loans and assistance of either of the European belligerents, the matter should be quietly taken up through this legation with the American Government and American financiers. I was then called upon and asked by the Prime Minister to communicate by cable with my Department of State or Government.” Caldwell adds: “Owing to conditions and relations with certain European powers of which the Department is no doubt aware, they would very much prefer to quietly obtain this loan in America.” On the jewels, Caldwell writes: “The jewels spoken of consist of various kinds of precious stones, which, I understand belonged formerly to one of the Shahs. These were recently inventoried and appraised (by a French expert at thirty five thousand [million] tumans, but it is thought that in as much as this expert desired to buy them at the appraised value, these stones are of much greater value.” He concludes: “If security is desired, it is agreeable to pledge these, or sell them at near their real value. Should this latter be done, an opportunity of profitable investment awaits somebody. I was asked that we do not make the matter public.”[6]

On October 4, 1915, Caldwell telegraphs: “The Government of Persia anxiously awaiting a reply.”[7] On October 11, 1915, the State Department responds to Caldwell: “Your September tenth. F.Q. Brown, of banking house of Redmond and Company, New York, desires information relative to Persian loan. Ascertain where suggested collateral now is, where it could be lodged in case of loan, and how it could be examined by expert.”[8] On October 23, 1915, Caldwell replies: “Received your instructions. Re the loan to the Persian Government, jewels, mostly pearls, but some diamonds, etc. now in their Government vault, Teheran. Prime Minister suggests examination valuation here by expert parties after further full details have been agreed upon. Liabilities ten million, thirty years annual interest, the principal in thirty installments. Securities could be lodged in any reliable place or country. Lender may select jewels.”[9] In a dispatch of October 28,

1915, Caldwell writes: “I may state that the officials of the Persian Government are anxiously awaiting in suspense for some definite word from America. It would seem that this loan is entirely feasible. The security is doubtless ample.” Caldwell then provides information on these jewels: “I have recently learned from the Prime Minister that he considers the jewels (owned by the Persian Government and not by the Royal family) to be worth from fifty million to sixty million dollars. These consist mostly of pearls but there are also diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. All these were brought from India by the Persian Government some hundred or more years ago. They have ever since been carefully stored in the Royal vaults… As stated in my former despatch, these jewels were appraised some four or five years ago by a French expert, (who came here at an expense of $5,000.00) at a value of thirty million dollars; but in-as-much as he desired to procure a sale for them at this price the officials are convinced that the value of these rare and ancient jewels is much in excess of that appraisement… I may say that it is suggested that the value of these jewels be determined by two experts, one to be appointed by and at the expense of the proposed lender, the other by and at the expense of the Persian Government; but that, if, on examination of the jewels they be not found to be enough to secure this loan, the Persian Government will pay the entire cost of the examination. I have asked for a list, which must be extant, of the value, grade, weight, condition and size of these jewels but the Prime Minister has so far been unable to find it.” Caldwell also discusses the loan matter: “Of course they don’t want to pledge or pawn all of these but only enough to secure the $10,000,000.00 loan and they suggest offering one dollar worth of jewels for seventy five cents obtained. Personally I doubt if the loan could be secured on such small margin and I so suggested to the Prime Minister. However, I am of the opinion that ample security will be given in the amount of jewels pledged… I am also informed by these Persian officials that at least three of the European Powers have offered to make this loan but that the Department can doubtless see the necessity and wisdom of Persia refusing their proffered aid at this time. It is desired that this matter be kept from the newspapers and handled very quietly.” Caldwell concludes: “It is also agreeable that the jewels pledged be held in safe keeping by any responsible firm in New York or elsewhere. May I ask that the matter be given immediate and serious attention if there is any likelihood of such a loan be negotiated.”[10]

In the end nothing came of it and after some desultory correspondence the matter was dropped. In a letter dated January 14, 1916, E.C. Porter, commercial agent in charge of the Commerce Department's New York office, informs that a representative of Harris, Forbes and Company, a Mr. Bennett Walker, had expressed an interest in looking into the transaction. Walker informs Porter that "Harris, Forbes & Company had given this subject some thought and that they were interested in pursuing the matter to some extent. Mr. Walker stated that any loan made on the basis of the security suggested would necessarily require that the security be placed in the hands of a trustee in the United States. If it is possible, therefore, for the jewels to be brought on from Persia a loan might be placed… Mr. Walker wished to make it clear that the banking concerns interested in this proposition are not committed to the loan, although they have expressed an interest in it."[11]

At the height of the famine two years later, the Iranian government, desperate for money, had again tried to borrow money from America. On April 7, 1918, Caldwell telegraphs: "Persian Government requests me to ascertain if the United States of America would make loan to Persia of one million tomans (at present rate of exchange nearly two million dollars); entire sum to be used exclusively for the purpose of famine relief in Persia and under my personal surveillance." Caldwell adds: "I earnestly recommend serious consideration of this request, compliance there with, if possible, would be a most humane act and would ameliorate present horrible conditions beside having a most salutary political effect."[12] Two days later he follows up: "Referring to my cable of April 7, in the matter of requested loan to Persia. I have reason to think that should the Government of the United States deem it expedient, security for repayment might be arranged either by hypothecation of certain customs receipts, or if you prefer a personal pledge, the Persian Government might be induced to pledge their valuable jewels."[13] On May 1, 1918, the State Department had sent an instruction to Caldwell that contains:

You may advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs of, and with his permission give publicity to, the following:

The Government of the United States has received with great concern reports from Persia in regard to the suffering of the Persian people through famine. Through the American Minister at Teheran this Government has now received the request of the Persian Government for a loan of one million Tomans for the purpose of famine relief.

The laws of the United States permit only of loans to those governments which are engaged in the war against Germany, but in order to meet this provision of the law the Government has urged relief societies in this country to aid in ameliorating, as far as possible, the unfortunate situation in Persia. A loan necessarily carries with it an obligation for repayment. The American people, however, have already donated the sum of $2,037,173.48 sent directly to Tabriz and Teheran, besides other money sent to northwestern Persia through Tiflis, and are ready to give from one to two million dollars additional during the present year. Consequently Persia is receiving as a gift from the United States a sum for relief purposes far in excess of the one million tomans which she requested as a loan. The contribution which the American people have made to Persian relief is indicative of American sympathy with the Persian people in their hour of trial and suffering.[14]

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "MORATORIUM"

In January 1915, the British and the Russian governments had established the so-called financial "moratorium" for the purpose of helping the Iranian government deal with the fiscal crisis. In a dispatch of September 2, 1918, Southard describes the establishment of a "moratorium" in early 1915: "At the beginning of the war many of the Persian customs stations were under supervision of the Russian and British governments which applied a part of the collections to the payments and interest on the loans which Persia had from the two governments named. As the war stopped a great deal of Persian commerce, and otherwise lessened the government's income, financial matters in Teheran became more critical than usual. Great Britain and Russia decided, effective January, 1915, to declare a moratorium with reference to these loans and interest payments and to turn them over to the use of the Persian government for the time." After the establishment of a moratorium, the Russians and the British had attempted to establish a

"financial commission". Southard elaborates: "But in order to insure that the money thus made available would be spent for actual governmental purposes and not, as in some instances would have occurred, go to the pockets of the officials responsible for its expenditure, the British and the Russian governments decided upon the appointment of a financial commission to control the expenditure of this money."[15]

In a dispatch of November 1, 1918, Caldwell further informs on Iranian customs revenues: "The chief source of Persia's revenue has always been the customs receipts. Those in the North were hypothecated for the payment of the Russian loan installments and those in the South were similarly allocated to the payment of British Government and public loans. The customs receipts have always been sufficient to meet these obligations with a surplus, mainly from the northern customs, of about £150,000 Stg. yearly which sum became available for internal administrative purposes. Since the war and more especially since the collapse of Russia the northern customs receipts have dwindled to practically nothing and the surplus has of course disappeared." Caldwell adds that the southern customs revenues were irregular and that the Iranian government had experienced difficulty in obtaining the money. He elaborates: "By an arrangement made with the Imperial Bank of Persia at the time these loans were contracted all revenue from the Southern customs houses is deposited in the branches of that bank and eventually transferred to Teheran. As the Persian Government was indebted to the bank for rather considerable sums this surplus was sequestered by the bank and not turned over to the Persian Government. Now [in 1918], however, all debts, about which there can be no question, have been paid off and the surpluses are released as received to the Government for its internal administration. There are still outstanding debts of a controversial nature, which the bank still claims, due to brigandage and the closing and looting of the branches of the bank in the South in 1915 when there was disaffection among the gendarmerie and subsequently in Western and Northern Persia (Kermanshah, Hamadan, Tabriz and Resht) by the invasion of the Turks and the action of the jungle tribesmen. These claims are being held in abeyance, however, until the end of the war."[16]

## ANGLO-RUSSIAN DEMAND FOR A "FINANCIAL COMMISSION"

On May 10, 1916, Caldwell telegraphs: “Persian finances placed under control of budget committee composed of one Englishman, one Russian and one Persian.”[17] In a dispatch dated October 13, 1916, Caffery dwells on the desperate financial and political situation: “I have the honor to state that, as hitherto noted, the Government here is in a very embarrassing financial situation, and were it not for the funds advanced by the English and Russian Governments it would be unable to carry on the affairs of government; in fact the Persian nation seems to have reached that stage when it is no longer able to maintain an efficient existence without outside aid, the chief result of this being the anarchic conditions existing in the larger part of the country.”[18] In an interesting dispatch of January 6, 1917, Caldwell describes the monthly payments and ties them to the appreciation of the kran: “Confidential. Various causes are assigned for this most extraordinary condition. The Persian Government being unable to meet her debts and having declared a moratorium, has succeeded in completing arrangements, with the help of the English and Russian Legations, for borrowing thirty thousand (30,000.) pounds sterling monthly from the Imperial Bank of Persia, an English concern. It is claimed that this bank, having practically a monopoly of banking concessions in Persia, arbitrarily fixes the rates of exchange. At any rate, when negotiations for the loan were in progress, the Persian Government desired to borrow tomans, while the lender insisted in lending pounds sterling, and the claim that the bank arbitrarily fixes the rate is lent color by the fact that, just before the monthly payment is made to the Persian Government, the value of the English pound sterling goes down and the toman increases in exchange value.” Caldwell concludes with the following: “On the other hand, it is claimed by the bank that the presence of the large number of Russian troops in Persia, necessitating the spending of something like one million (1,000,000.) rubles per month, has made the value of the pound sterling very low and that if the Russian forces are increased by thirty or forty thousand men, as proposed, it would not be surprising if the rate went lower and remained there until after the end of the present European conflict. A most unusual feature of the affair is that all gold, including Persian, is considerably below par, and is not current, while silver and paper money are of greater exchange value.”[19] In short, with the drastic decline in external commerce because of the war, customs revenues declined considerably. To assist the Iranian government, a “moratorium” was imposed on the repayment of Iran’s debt to Russia and Great Britain.

Furthermore, as above-noted, the actual sums that were collected from the southern customs were seized by the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia. Subsequently, the British and the Russian governments agreed to provide the Iranian government with a monthly payment of £30,000. But with the sharp depreciation of the pound and the big rise in prices, this amount was entirely insufficient to meet the needs of the Iranian government. Shortly after, a dispute arose over the Anglo-Russian demand for a "financial commission" to take charge of Iran's finances.

In a dispatch of January 10, 1917, Caldwell elaborates on the Anglo-Russian demand for the establishment of a "financial commission" and the Iranian resistance thereto: "It appears that during the late cabinet of Sipih-Salar, who was readily inclined to Russian policies, a tentative agreement was reached whereby the entire finances of the Persian Government were placed in the hands of a committee of five, composed of Mr. Husons, an Englishman; Mr. Modele, a Russian; Mr. Heynssens, a Belgian, and two Persians, to be designated by the Russian Legation. Mr. Husons is an employee of the local English bank, Mr. Modele of the Russian bank and Mr. Heynssens is the General Administrator of Persian Customs." Caldwell adds: "Before this measure became a law it was necessary that the same be signed by the Prime Minister, the Shah, and ratified by the Medjlis. It was signed by the Prime Minister but not by the Foreign Minister nor by the Shah, and the Medjliss has not been in session to ratify the same." To press matters, the British and the Russians had stopped payments to the Iranian government: "The Russian Government is gain pressing the matter, much to the discomfiture of some members of the present Cabinet, which has remained constantly in session for several days last past. Meanwhile the monthly loan of thirty thousand pounds sterling to the Persian Government is being held up for the last four months, or since the resignation of Sipih-Salar's late Cabinet." Caldwell concludes: "Some of the constitutional Persian statesmen fear that the placing of the control of their Government's finances in the hands of an aggressive foreign power would be the extinguishing and final act marking the end of Persia's independence."[20]

## THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN NOTE AND THE IRANIAN REPLY

On January 23, 1917, the British and Russian ministers in Tehran had sent a joint note to the Iranian prime minister, Vossough-ed-Dowleh. Calling the

note a “near ultimatum,” Caldwell provides a translation in a dispatch of January 29, 1917:

Although five and one half months have elapsed since the conclusion of the of the arrangement dated the 6th of August last, between the Governments of His Imperial Majesty the Shah, on the one hand and the Legations of Great Britain and Russia, on the other hand, the Imperial Persian Government has hitherto refrained from carrying out its engagements, taken by virtue of the said agreement, for extension of the powers and prerogatives of the mixed financial commission.

Now, the payment of the monthly subsidy of 200,000 tomans depending, as it naturally does, on the establishment of this Commission, the Governments of Russia and Great Britain have, as in reason bound, not been in a position to put these monthly allowances at the disposal of the Persian Government, with the exception, however, of the first and second installments—the latter previously deducted from the proceeds of accumulated moratorium receipts and to be refunded to the said credit.

On the other hand, the Persian Government is aware that the Governments of Great Britain and Russia have not failed to take in hand the reorganization of the public forces provided for in the aforesaid arrangement.

Such being the case, the undersigned Ministers of Great Britain and Russia have the honor to inform Your Highness that if on or before the 1st of February next the Persian Government does not take the necessary measures to invest the mixed Financial Commission with the increased powers in accordance with the said agreement, their Governments will, on their side, consider themselves released from the obligation of paying the monthly installments of the subsidy accrued due since the 6th of August, when the exchange of notes took place, and the payment of these monthly allowances will only take effect from the day of the formal institution of the mixed Financial Commission on the basis of the arrangement of the 6th of August last.

If, after the 1st of February 1917, the Persian Government still perseveres in not taking into account the arrangement arrived at, the two Legations will not fail to make known to it the further designs of their Government.

[Signed] *Charles M. Marling,*[Signed] *N. Etter*."[21]

In a note from Vossough-ed-Dowleh to the British and Russian ministers, dated January 31, 1917, the Persian government had rejected the ultimatum. In a dispatch of February 3, 1917, Caldwell reports: "I have the honor to append a translation of the Persian Prime and Foreign Minister's reply rejecting the proposal of the British and Russian Legations and governments for the appointment of a certain mixed financial commission for Persia." Caldwell adds: "It is to be noted that in the second paragraph of this reply the said Minister delicately mentions that his knowledge of the 'former agreement' is gained from the 'copy which was furnished me by the Imperial Russian Legation.' It is said no part of the original correspondence, or copies thereof, are filed in the Persian Foreign Office."[22] The reply included the following: "after having noted the tenor of the said note (of August 6, 1916) from a copy which was furnished me by the Imperial Russian Legation and after having examined the points stated in it, which the Sepahsalar himself qualified as 'propositions' to be presented for the approval of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, in accordance with the requirements of the constitutional law of the Empire, I have not failed to bring to the attention of Your Excellency verbally in the course of conversations during the last few months, the point of view of my government, on this subject and I hasten on this occasion to refer to Your Excellency to these conversations." The reply also attempts to add sugar to the rejection: "It is evident that the Imperial Government [of Persia] gives proper value to the amicable advice formulated by the two Governments in regard to the amelioration of the financial administration. In conformity with these ideas the Persian Government counts on engaging European specialists and provide them with necessary powers so as to obtain a perfected reorganization of its finances and to furnish necessary guarantees to its creditors. It goes without saying that my government will not fail to proceed to an exchange of views with the Governments of Russia and Great Britain concerning the choice of a third nation that should furnish the specialists."

Further commenting on the affair, Caldwell writes: "The refusal of the Government of Persia to carry out the provision according to arrangement of August sixth is based on the alleged fact that the aforesaid draft

agreement did not bear the signature of the then Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, was not signed by, nor known to the Shah of Persia, and therefore same were never ratified by Persian Congress as provided by law. It is doubtful whether or not the present Persian cabinet, though rated as very pro-Russian, will accept these demands." There can be no doubt that the Iranian resistance to the Anglo-Russian demands was encouraged by statements coming out of Washington, in particular President Wilson's declaration of December 19, 1916. In a telegram of January 29, 1917, Caldwell adds: "The Prime Minister says, 'The Cabinet and the people have read with greatest interest and with much pleasure the address of the President of the United States to the Senate and should like to see adopted his suggestion that all nations adopt Monroe Doctrine so that, quoting the President's message, no nation should seek to extend itself or its power over any other nation or people but that nations little and great should be free to develop unhindered and unafraid. End of quotation from the President's message.' Many Persians believe and hope that the President had Persia in mind when uttering the sentence."[23]

## MEMORANDUM BY MOIN-OL-VOZARA

A matter that the Iranians felt very bitter about was the use of the pre-war exchange rate in the transactions with the Iranian government when there had been a large appreciation of the kran. At the onset of the war in August 1914, the kranpound exchange rate was 60 krans per pound. By 1917, the kran had appreciated to about 25 krans per pound. As noted, Iran was to receive £30,000 per month, and when the Iranian government sold the depreciated pounds, it obtained less than one-half the number of krans as it had previously. That is, instead of receiving nearly 200,000 tomans it received 80,000 tomans. The Persians contended that with the appreciation of the kran and the depreciation of the pound, they should have obtained £60,000. Although technically the British were in the right (their obligation was to pay £30,000 a month), at a time when a devastating famine stalked the land and killed millions of Persians, this was a particularly vicious act on the part of the British. With hyper inflation, moreover, the purchasing power of the 80,000 tomans had been greatly diminished. Southard notes that next to the military occupation of Iran and the establishment of the South Persia Rifles, the Iranians felt most bitterly about the British attempts

to gain complete financial control of the country, and the application of the pre-war exchange rate in their transactions with the Iranian government.[24]

In reporting the Anglo-Russian note in his dispatch of January 29, 1917, Caldwell adds: "In order to make the matter clearer I apprehend herewith some notes or comments sent me by an employee of the Persian Foreign Office (Prince Moin-ol Visoreh) and while I do not desire to express any opinion upon all of the matters of which he speaks nor to be understood as indorsing and vouching for every charge and statement that he makes, I may add, that in my opinion Moinol-Visoreh [Moin ol-Vozara] is in every way reliable and trustworthy and one of the very best and most patriotic Persians. He is the son of Prince Ala-es-Sultaneh, who has been Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and has held several other Cabinet portfolios here, and Moin-ol-Visoreh's brother is the present Persian Minister to England. These comments are, of course, entirely confidential."[25]

On the "agreement" of August 6, 1916, Moin-ol-Vozara writes: "This so-called 'arrangement' or 'agreement' to which the Sipeh-Salar (Prime Minister at that time) alone, who was put into office solely by Russian pressure, was a party, has been repudiated by the Persian Government and nation. It was arrived at clandestinely, without the knowledge of the Shah and in defiance of the sacred Constitutional laws; the Foreign Office, moreover, did not serve as the channel of communication. It cannot be binding on the Persian Government, much less on the Persian Nation, whose independence and sovereignty are hereby suppressed." On the so-called "Financial Commission," he writes: "The 'extension of the powers of this mixed Financial Commission' is tantamount to granting dictatorial powers, extending to practically every branch of administration, to a body of incompetent individuals whose two influential members are Russian and British. Persia is far from being bankrupt and has never refused to meet her obligations. Her present temporary financial troubles are due in a large measure to foreign interference and intrigues and to the far reaching effects of the European war. Why should she be trampled down as perhaps no country has ever been, and such a pernicious and distasteful measure imposed upon her by threats and ultimatums?… And now, again, Russia and Great Britain, taking advantage of the abnormal and irregular state of things created by this war, are resorting to financial pressure and making use of their military force to browbeat us into submitting to terms which

nothing justifies and which are directly derogatory to our most sacred rights and to our existence as an independent country. They pretend on the other hand, to stand up for the rights of smaller states and weaker nations and for the principles of nationalities. They seem, nevertheless, to be in a great hurry to settle the Persian question between themselves before the Peace conference gives us an opportunity to raise our voice in the defense of our interests with the help and support of the President of the generous American nation." On the threat of withholding further payments, Moin-ol-Vozara writes: "It may mean the cutting off of supplies, and the withholding of the moratorium funds. This drastic step would, however, be likewise tainted with illegality, the moratorium arrangement being a distinct transaction, unconnected with the 'agreement of the 6th of August' and arrived at long before any discussion of the mixed financial commission or the extension of its powers took place. It may well be to explain that the moratorium (or temporary suspension of payment of loan interest and sinking fund), was unavoidably requested by the Persian Government owing to the serious falling off of its customs and other receipts which the European war and the spreading of hostilities to Persian territory, in violation of our neutrality and in spite of our repeated protests, had unfortunately brought about."

The memorandum also reveals an important way of depriving the Iranian government of its revenue. Under the moratorium agreement, the entire sum collected from the southern and northern customs by Great Britain and Russia, respectively, was to be turned over to the Persian government. To deprive the Iranian government of its money, the two countries had resorted to exchange rate chicanery. The memorandum explainsh: "Instead, however, of getting thereby a sufficient portion of our revenues released in tomans, as was naturally to be expected, the two banks (Imperial Bank of Persia, English and the Russian State Bank) arbitrarily decided to pay us in pounds sterling. Simultaneously the rate of exchange fell so low that we are now getting only 80,000 tomans instead of 200,000 tomans per months." Moreover, with hyper inflation and the vast increase in the price level during the war, the purchasing power of the monthly customs receipts had dwindled to practically nothing. Finally, as to the establishment of the South Persia Rifles and the suggested expansion of the Cossacks, it is observed: "The 'reorganization' of these 'public forces' means the

partitioning of Persia and handing over all military power in the North to the Russians, and in the South to the British."[26]

In a dispatch dated February 26, 1917, Caldwell comments on foreign intrigue: "The Department is doubtless aware that possibly no country on earth suffers so much from Legation Government as does Persia. It is doubtful if a single Prime Minister has been appointed in Persia during my stay at this post except at the request and earnest demand of some Legation. Even Governors of Provinces are almost universally appointed through Legations." Caldwell identifies the main culprits: "Of course such activity is usually confined to the British and Russian Legations, but of late other Legations have begun their activity. It is, perhaps, needless to say that this Legation has always refrained from any such participation." Caldwell then describes the attempts by the Spanish and Italian legations to get into the act, and in the process he sheds much useful light on the political situation: "When the question of the adoption or rejection of the Financial Control note was before the Persian Cabinet for consideration the British and Russian Ministers pressed very hard for the acceptance of the same and their efforts were supplemented by the other Ministers of the Allied powers; even the Spanish Minister volunteered to advise the Prime Minister to accept the conditions of said note, which advice was not followed. Local feeling has, in consequence, been somewhat aroused and a few days ago one Ismael Khan, a Persian who had charge of the public granary and who was a confidential reporter to the Oriental Secretary of the British Legation, which said secretary is generally credited with dictating many appointments and by the Persians with pernicious political activity in local affairs, was murdered when passing along the street and as yet his assailants have not been apprehended." He informs on the Italians: "The Italian Minister, Count Arrivabene, was reported to be insisting very strongly on the Persian Government accepting the Financial Control note, and upon late occasion, when displeased with the action of the Prime Minister he pounded on the latter's table and threatened to pull down his flag and to sever diplomatic relations altogether with Persia. This is the same Minister who challenged Sir Charles Marling, the British Minister, to a duel last Spring… A few days ago both the Italian Minister and the Spanish Minister received anonymous threatening letters advising them that they would meet the fate of the late Ismael Khan if they continued to volunteer unsought advice detrimental to Persian interests."[27]

Despite the onset of famine and the desperate financial situation, the Iranian government had refused the insistent demands for a financial commission, and the British government had continued to apply pressure by withholding payments. An example of British withholding of payments to Iran is reported in the *Raad* of January 28, 1918. The paper reports: "The Foreign Office requested the Imperial Bank of Persia and the British Legation to allow Persia to have the extra revenue of the customs for the last year, which amounts to 900,000 tomans. The former replied that it has been applied on the debt of the Persian Government to England."[28] In a dispatch of September 2, 1918, Southard writes: "This commission was made up of the Director of the Russian Bank at Teheran, the Commercial Attaché of the British Legation at Teheran, the Belgian Director of the Customs, and two Persians. The Persian government objected to this as an infringement of its sovereignty, and it is understood that the financial commission never actually exercised its power." With the Russian revolution, the British had put on additional pressure. Southard writes: "The money was used by the Persian government until a little more than a year ago when it was decided by the British Legation that the financial commission should assume its proper powers. The Persian cabinet then in power refused to accept the money under these conditions and none has since been used by the Persian government." Southard also states: "the more radical Persian Democrats could see in the financial commission only a direct step by Great Britain and Russia to control entirely the finances of the country, and they feel very bitter about it." With the appointment of a new Vossough-ed-Dowleh cabinet on August 6, 1918, things were expected to be different: "The present Vossough-ed-Dowleh cabinet may, it is thought, accept the control of the financial commission and use the money which, according to my information, has been accumulating in the banks at Teheran to the credit of the Persian government."[29] In his dispatch of November 1, 1918, Caldwell writes: "Before the collapse of Russia the Russian and British Governments advanced about thirty thousand pounds sterling a month to the Persian Government. Since the revolution in Russia this has been carried on, though suspended at intervals and in much reduced sum, by the British Government."[30]

With the appointment of the second Vossough-ed-Dowleh cabinet in August 1918, to support and maintain the cabinet, the British had begun paying a monthly sum of 350,000 tomans. Caldwell reports: "There are

certain amount of advances being made, now nearly monthly, by the British Government to enable the Persian Government to meet its current administrative needs. There was a considerable interval when no advances were made but the sum total of Persia's indebtedness from this cause alone will aggregate a fairly considerable sum at the end of the war. The interest payable on these advances and the date of their liquidation has not yet been determined but will be arranged at the end of the war."[31] Six months later, White reports: "The monthly advances of the British Government to the present cabinet of three hundred and fifty thousand tomans (Ts. 350,000) continue but no definite arrangements for their liquidation nor the interest they are to bear have been made as yet."[32] Three months later, White reports that the financial situation of the government was much improved: "The finances of Persia were in a most deplorable state and the treasury did not have sufficient funds for the most pressing daily needs of administration. The British Government was ready and willing to help out, and, ever since the Vossough-ed-Dowleh cabinet assumed office in August 1918, has been making monthly advances to the Persian Government of three hundred and fifty thousand tomans."[33] These "advances" were to continue until the fall of the Vossough cabinet in June 1920. In addition, to the monthly payments to the Vossough cabinet, the fiscal situation had improved. Caldwell reveals that Persian Government expenses had been reduced. In particular, the British had taken over the Cossacks and were paying its expenses, and the Persian gendarmerie had all but been dissolved. He elaborates: "Besides the surplus received from the Southern customs the Persian Government receives, as stated above, certain monthly advances from the British Government. In addition to this their administrative expenses are very much reduced by the fact that the Gendarmery has been decreased to something under three thousand men from over eight thousand and the Cossack brigade is now financed by Great Britain." Caldwell concludes: "Persia is thus in a position to meet her immediate needs while the war continues. After the war her position will hardly be so favorable." Caldwell adds: "The authority of the Shah has been destroyed and nothing has been set up in its place."[34]

## BRITISH GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF THE ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY

On May 28, 1901, the concession to produce and transport petroleum in Iran, with the exception of the provinces adjacent to Russia, was granted to a British subject, William Knox D'Arcy. Oil was discovered in southwest Iran in 1908, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) was established in 1909 and acquired the concession. Crude oil production began in 1911, and the company established a refinery on the island of Abadan at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab. In a dispatch of October 7, 1912, the American consul in Baghdad writes: "I have the honor to report that the Anglo-Persian refinery at Abadan, Persian Arabistan, has now started operations."[35] Soon after, the British government had obtained a controlling interest in APOC. In a report dated June 26, 1914, and entitled "British Contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for the Supply of Oil to the Admiralty," the American vice and deputy consul-general in London writes: "I have the honor to report that the British Government has recently entered into a contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for the supply of oil to the Admiralty as it may be required, and as the company may be able to produce it." It adds: "The contract, which has just been approved by a very large majority in the House of Commons, involves the expenditure of some $10,706, 300. The First Lord of the Admiralty, in explaining the contract, stated that $9,737,866 would be invested in shares of the company, and $968,433 in debentures, the capital investment to be allocated in installments, $486,650 to be devoted immediately to taking up sufficient shares to give the Government its qualification for voting and appointing two ex-officio directors." It concludes: "The property of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was until recently wholly within Persian territory, but it appears that in the recent readjustment of boundary lines a portion of it is now under Turkish jurisdiction."[36] Southard refers to the connection between the British Government and APOC, and it must be made clear that the two were one and the same. APOC was an arm of the British government which owned two-thirds of the "Company" shares.

As part of its continued expansion, APOC had on December 2, 1919, put out a new prospectus, and had invited subscriptions to its newly issued preference shares. In supplying the State Department a copy of the prospectus, American Consul Robert Skinner states: "This prospectus states officially that the Company was in-corporated in 1909 for the purpose of acquiring a concession granted by the Shah of Persia, 'giving the exclusive right to search for, carry away and sell petroleum, natural gas, asphalt and

ozokerite throughout the Persian Empire (except five Northern Provinces bordering on the Caspian Sea) for a period of sixty years from May 28, 1901'." Skinner concludes with the following: "It is further stated in the prospectus that the British Government 'in the year 1914 subscribed at par for 2,000,000 Ordinary Shares of £1 each, 1,000 Preference Shares of £1 each and £199,000 Debenture Stock, thereby securing a controlling interest in the Company'. Thus it will be noted that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Limited, is for all practical purposes the British Government."[37]

On December 3, 1919, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced in Parliament the British Government's desire to purchase 3,000,000 additional shares in order to maintain its control of APOC. His statement is reported by Skinner: "Mr. Chamberlain: His Majesty's Government at present hold 2,000,000 £1 shares in the Anglo-Persian Company, out of 3,000,000 ordinary shares, and have agreed to subscribe in the same proportion to the total ordinary share capital for a further 3,000,000 ordinary shares of £1 each, on which 1s. per share will be immediately paid up. It has been arranged that the remaining 19s. per share on 2,000,000 shares will be paid shortly. The calls on the remaining 1,000,000 shares will not be made for some years. Tentative arrangements for financing the call of 19s. per share on the 2,000,000 shares have been made and will be embodied in a Bill which will be presented to the House immediately."[38]

On December 11, 1919, there was a discussion in the House of Commons following the presentation of a resolution authorizing the use of public funds for the purchase of APOC shares. The full transcript is given by Skinner, and excerpts follow. Remarks by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Baldwin, included the following: "This Bill to be brought in on the Resolution is an Amendment of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, (Acquisition of Capital) Act of 1914, and hon. Members who are familiar with that Act will remember the circumstances in which it was passed. It was at a time when the Persian oilfield was being developed, and simultaneously with that the use of oil was rapidly passing from the experimental stage. The Admiralty were very anxious that, if possible, one of the potentially great oilfields of the world should not be only worked by British capital, but be actually controlled by the Government, holding sufficient capital in that business to give it deciding voice in the policy. Under those circumstances a sum of £2,200,000 was taken from the Old

Sinking Fund… We know two things which we did not know for certain then. We know this is a great oilfield and we know that the oil fuel has come to stay. The Anglo Persian Company has been successful beyond, I should imagine, the hopes of its most ardent admirers in the old days. So much has the business developed that they have had to raise a considerable amount of fresh capital, and the question, of course, then arose was the Government to apply for enough of that new issue of capital to still maintain its controlling interest in the Company, or was it to give up the position it had held and run the risk of the shares being otherwise taken up and acquired by various people and by various interests, and that thus we should lose the position we acquired and held? Apart from that although I should never be one to advocate the investment of public money in a company for the sake of gain and only on the ground of policy, yet I would remind the House that there is every prospect of this Anglo Persian investment being an extremely remunerative one… Hon. Members may ask what is the urgency of getting this Bill through. I am very sorry it has had to be done in a hurry but we gave notice to the House in answer to a question by the hon. Member for Newcastle East (Major Barnes) on the 3rd of this month of the Government's intention in this matter, and the application for the Government portion of the shares has to be sent in at once. The prospectus came out about ten days ago I think, and I was particularly anxious not to make formal application until, at any rate, we saw that the policy which we proposed received the assent of Parliament."

Remarks by Sir F. Banbury included the following: "It is quite true that years and years ago the late Lord Beaconsfield did take shares in the Suez Canal Company, and that that policy was resisted by the then Liberal Government, and especially by Mr. Gladstone, but that resistance was wrong, that in the first place the acquisition of those shares was commercially a very successful operation, and secondly, it led to the control of a great country on our road to India." Even more revealing remarks were made by Sir J.D. Rees: "I remember what happened in 1914 very well. The question then was the supply of fuel for the Navy—a great Imperial question. It was not a money speculation, but if in the course of action taken for the British Navy, and for a great Imperial purpose, the Government also happens to make a large profit, which is extremely unlike most of the operations, it does not seem to me be a great additional reason for reproving the action they then took, because the British taxpayer has gained largely by

this operation… There is also the fact that my right hon. friend left entirely out of consideration. That this investment gives the British government a prepondering influence in Persia. Apart from the trade of Persia, this is a most important link between the Mother country and our Indian Empire."[39]

The proceedings in London were keenly watched by the American oil companies. On February 6, 1920, L.T. Thomas of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, 26 Broadway, New York, had written to the Secretary of State enclosing the latest APOC prospectus discussed above, and had made the following comments: "It occurs to us that the enclosed prospectus dealing with the increase in capital of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, to-gether with the form of application for additional shares may prove of interest but, in any event, should be of record in the Department of State." The writer then adds in the next paragraph: "The British Government, itself, holds a majority of the shares to-gether with the voting power in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which company has a concession with the exclusive petroleum rights for the entire Empire of Persia with the exception of the provinces bordering on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. The Concession embraces 4/5 of the Empire of Persia and carries with it exclusive pipeline privileges of the entire country."[40]

As to the control and ownership of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company by the British government, Southard adds the following observation: "The Persians are well acquainted with the desire of the British to have their own independent sources of oil supply as applied to Persia and in a recent report of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company a quotation from a speech attributed to Lloyd George, in which he referred to the Admiralty financing of the oil company, is made as follows: 'The Minister and Cabinet which secured control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and thereby established an important source of supply, *free from foreign* or monopolistic domination of any kind, of a commodity which is necessary for our national existence, have performed a greater service than Disraeli, etc.' The underscoring is mine to show the part of this quotation which the Persians have seized upon to show that the British intend permanently to possess or control as their own territory that part of South Persia in which the oil fields are located."[41]

## WITHHOLDING OF OIL REVENUES

The financial strangulation of Iran was completed by the withholding of the oil revenues by the British government. On the basis of the D'Arcy concession of 1901, APOC was obligated to pay Iran 16% of its total profits. In addition, the Iranian government had a 10% ownership in the company. Thus the Iranian government was entitled to one-quarter of the profits of the company. From 1913, oil production increased rapidly, and the profits of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company expanded even faster. The figures as reported by financial statements of the APOC are indicative of the profits earned by the company. A 1952 World Bank report on APOC includes the following revealing statement: "Despite cut-rate fuel oil supplied to the Admiralty and profits siphoned off into subsidiaries, the Company accounts disclose sizable profits, as the following statements of its Board Chairman, Sir Charles Greenway, show: '(1) We have surplus assets at the end of March 31, 1919, of nearly £6,000,000. (2) During the fiscal years 1921-1923, APOC spent for capital installations £32,000,000. (3) Between fiscal years 1914-1923, the Company made capital expenditures of £19,000,000 out of earnings and paid £9,500,000 in dividends and interest.'"[42]

Thus under the D'Arcy Agreement, it is clear, that Iran was entitled to many millions of pounds in oil royalties during 1913-1919. To illustrate, APOC had "surplus assets" of £6,000,000 in 1919; its capital expenditures "out of earnings," and its dividends and interest payments were in excess of £28,000,000, giving a total of £34,000,000 in reported profits. As these figures indicate and as I have shown elsewhere, Iran's just share was at least £8,000,000, not counting the large profits that were "siphoned off into subsidiaries," and the "cut-rate fuel" supplied to the British Admiralty. Actual payment was only £325,000, paid during 1913 and 1914.[43] Contrary to Southard's statement that the oil revenues had been "partially" withheld, they had been entirely withheld after 1914. Iran should have received £8 million ($40,000,000) during 1915-1919, or an average of £2,000,000 ($10 million) per year. That is, Iran's annual oil revenues if received were five times the total of $2 million expenditures by the American charities during 1917-1919. The records reveal that at a time when millions of Iranians died from famine, the British had illegally withheld payment of oil revenues due to the Iranian government. Assuredly, millions of Iranian lives would have been saved if the money had been paid to Iran by the British government. This constitutes a crime against humanity.

As noted in chapter two, in February 1915, following the British invasion of Khuzestan, some tribesmen had severed the oil pipeline in several locations. Although the pipeline was repaired and restored by June 1915, this episode was used as the pretext by the British to withhold Iran's oil revenues. Southard also elaborates on the matter: "In 1915 Persian tribesmen in Arabistan, instigated according to report by German and Turkish agents and encouraged by the threatened Turkish advance into that part of Persia, succeeded in damaging the wells of the company and the pipe line which carries the crude oil from the wells in the vicinity of Maidam-i-Naphta to the refineries at Abadan. The company estimated its damage at roughly £400,000 [$2,000,000], which some consider excessive, and held the Persian government responsible. To repay this damage payments of the royalties have been partially withheld, and as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company is known by the Persians to have been largely financed by the British Admiralty and therefore under government control, they allege that this is only another way in which the British government is persecuting Persia." A 1952 World Bank report discussed below reveals that actual damages to the wells and pipelines was about £20,000, a tiny fraction of royalties due to Iran. Moreover, while withholding payment to the Iranian government, APOC was undergoing huge expansion. Southard elaborates: "The oil company has had the services of British and Indian troops in guarding both its wells in the interior and its plant on the Shatt-el-Arab part of the Tigris river. Its business has tremendously increased in supplying fuel oil, benzine, and kerosene to the Mesopotamia Expeditionary force, and to other military forces of the British Empire in the East and the Near East. The company's business is growing very rapidly and one of the more recent evidences of its expansion is the installation of a supply plant at Aden, reported by despatch from the Aden Consulate in July 1917… The Anglo-Persian company has just shipped machinery for drilling near Khanikin and any oil developed there will probably be piped to a refinery to be constructed at Bagdad. In connection with the possible royalties to accrue to the Persian government during the next few years it may be mentioned that the recently completed double pipe line from Maidan-i-Naphta fields to the Abadan refineries is expected to have a capacity of 3,000,000 tons of crude oil per year." Not surprisingly, Southard adds: "An official of the company told me that the British Admiralty's original

investment of £3,000,000 in this company is now valued at about £8,000,000."[44]

On the withholding of oil revenues during 1915-1920, the 1952 World Bank report states the following: "The British Government had barely got into the picture before the Company began exerting pressure to amend the D'Arcy Concession. Its first move was to stop payment of royalties to Iran. This was done on the grounds that a neighboring government had incited the sabotage of the pipelines. Although the actual damage did not exceed $100,000, the Company used this as a pretext to withhold royalty payments for five years and even claimed some $2,000,000 in compensation. Article 14 of the Concession provided that Iran was *only* (original emphasis) obligated to protect the property of the Company and the lives of the employees, but was not liable for any loss or damage caused by acts beyond its control. Another reason given for withholding payments was that the Company had to pay a 3% royalty to the owners of the land on which the wells had been drilled. Article 3 of the Concession provided that the concessionaire was to compensate landowners for private lands taken for this purpose."[45]

Deprived of money, the Iranian government was helpless in the face of the most devastating famine in the history of the country. It could exercise no authority. Southard elaborates: "It is evident to most observers that Persia is at present a country without a real or effective government. The power of the Shah and the cabinet is apparently not felt outside of Teheran, so far as practical results are concerned, and the country largely governs itself without the help of the central government. The various provincial governors sent out from Teheran are able by their own prestige as men of wealth and education and the indifference of the people to political affairs, to maintain a governmental organization sufficient to collect taxes, the principal part of these being in grain which the people in many cases through force of habit bring into the government granaries… The professional governing class at Teheran takes a keen interest in Persian and international politics, but their government having neither an army nor credit is unable to exercise any real power in any matter which conflicts with the policies of the stronger European powers whose political interests in Persia are important."[46]

## NOTES

1. Caldwell, dispatch 11, 891.51/192, October 7, 1914.
2. Caldwell, dispatch 53 and enclosures, 891.00/838, April 7, 1915.
3. Caldwell, dispatch 65, 891.00/840, May 19, 1915.
4. Caldwell, dispatch 11, 891.51/192, October 7, 1914.
5. Caldwell, telegram, 891.51/193, September 10, 1915.
6. Caldwell, dispatch 92, 891.51/197, September 21, 1915.
7. Caldwell, telegram, 891.51/194, October 4, 1915.
8. Lansing to Caldwell, instruction, 891.51/195, October 11, 1915.
9. Caldwell, telegram 21, 891.51/196, October 23, 1915.
10. Caldwell, dispatch 99, 891.51/198, October 28, 1915.
11. Porter to E.E. Pratt, letter, 891.51/199, January 14, 1916.
12. Caldwell, telegram, 891.51/212, April 7, 1918.
13. Caldwell, telegram, 891.51/213, April 9, 1918.
14. Lansing to Caldwell, instruction 50, 891.51/213, May 1, 1918.
15. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.
16. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.
17. Caldwell, telegram, 891.51/200, May 10, 1916.
18. Caffery, dispatch 242, 891.00/894, October 13, 1916.
19. Caldwell, dispatch 269, 891.5151/1, January 6, 1917.
20. Caldwell, dispatch 270, 891.51/202, January 10, 1917.
21. Caldwell, dispatch 277 and enclosures, 891.51/204, January 29, 1917.
22. Caldwell, dispatch 278 and enclosure, 891.51/203, February 3, 1917.
23. Caldwell, telegram, 891.00/900, January 29, 1917.
24. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1051, September 2, 1918.
25. Caldwell, dispatch 277 and enclosures, 891.51/204, January 29, 1917.
26. Caldwell, dispatch 277 and enclosures, 891.51/204, January 29, 1917.
27. Caldwell, dispatch 282, 891.00/902, February 26, 1917.
28. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered) and enclosures, 891.00/962, February 2, 1918.
29. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1051, September 2, 1918.
30. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.

31. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.

32. White, Quarterly Report No. 3, 891.00/1096, April 4, 1919.

33. White, Quarterly Report No. 4, 891.00/1122, July 7, 1919.

34. Caldwell, Quarterly Report No. 1, 891.00/1072, November 1, 1918.

35. Sauer, dispatch 45, 891.6363/2, October 17, 1912.

36. Wescott, dispatch, 841.3472/3, June 26, 1914.

37. Skinner, dispatch 8856, 891.6363/8, December 2, 1919.

38. Skinner, dispatch 8876, 891.6363/9, December 5, 1919.

39. Skinner, dispatch 8907, 891.6363/10, December 13, 1919.

40. Thomas to Secretary of State, letter and enclosures, 891.6363/11, February 6, 1920.

41. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.

42. Majd, *Great Britain and Reza Shah*, p. 244.

43. Majd, op. cit., p. 245.

44. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.

45. Majd, *Great Britain and Reza Shah*, p. 243.

46. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.

*Chapter Seven*

# Blaming the Russians and the Iranians

From the very beginning the British had conducted a campaign designed to conceal their role in the famine and their own large-scale purchases of grain and foodstuff. Discussing the famine and its causes, Dunsterville compares the Iranian famine with those in India, claiming that when there was famine in India the British took effective measures to aid the famine victims. In contrast, in Iran, he claims, neither the government nor private entities did anything to relieve the suffering.[1] Dunsterville gives the following "causes" of the famine. First, the harvest of 1917 due to war and drought was bad. Secondly, Russian and Turkish troops had seized considerable amount of grain and other foodstuff during their occupation of Iran. Thirdly, there was hoarding by landowners and grain dealers. The rapid increase in grain prices produced anticipation of additional increases and the holders of grain stocks refused to place them on the market, "waiting for still better prices, regardless of the fact that every fractional rise in price meant a large increase in the death-rate among the very poor."[2] No mention of the British grain purchases, withholding of oil revenues, the financial strangulation, sequestering the means of transport, and prevention of food imports in the supposed "causes" of the famine.

## A SAMPLING OF PERSIAN PRESS REPORTS ON RUSSIAN DEPREDATION

The *Raad* of October 24, 1915 (No. 25), reports on the situation in Azerbaijan. It states that the Russians were buying all the available grain in places such as Salmas and were hoarding or transporting it to Russia. Price of wheat in Tabriz had increased to as much as 25 tomans per kharvar, and large crowds gathered in front of the bakeries, many going away empty handed. The quality of the available bread was so bad as to be practically

inedible. In Enzeli, also under Russian occupation, prices were increasing daily and ordinary people were in great difficulty. Following the Russian victories in Iran in the fall of 1915 and spring of 1916, and the occupation of the northern half of the country by Russia, hostile newspaper reports had ceased. It reemerged after the Russian revolution in the spring of 1917.

The *Iran* of May 21, 1917, contains the following report on extortion by Russian troops: "Information has lately been received from different places telling of the bad treatment accorded to people by the Russian soldiers. Yesterday's telegrams from Kazvin and Koom assert that they mistreat the shopkeepers. This, happening at the time when Russia is becoming free and people are expecting good conduct from her citizens, brings great sorrow… There is a telegram from Resht, from a number of Ardebil merchants, complaining of the Russian soldiers, who, with the help of some natives, go to different houses and tell the owner that the premises must be turned over for use of the army. The owner, being helpless, pays them a sum of money to pass by his house and then the soldiers proceed to the house of his neighbor to treat him in the same manner. Some people have made this a source of living, while, in reality, the Russian soldiers are occupying the Gal Dowlat, which has more houses than are necessary for their use. We request the Government to remedy this state of affairs… A direct report received at this office states that some time ago fifty-two policemen were arrested by the Russian Army at Bijar and taken to Ganjeh."[3] The *Iran* of May 31, 1917, writes: "For some time past complaints have been received from the villages around Teheran regarding the depredations of the Russian military men, who are taking away the camels, mules, donkeys and other live stock of the villagers. This matter has caused great uneasiness to the people for they are left without any means of bringing their grain, fruit and produce to market. It is to be hoped that these wrongs will be stopped immediately and it seems that the Government is taking the necessary steps in the matter." In the same issue of the newspaper, a telegram from Qum contains the following: "For more than a year and a half, we, the unfortunate people of Khoom, have been under the oppression of the Russian army. In order to avoid bringing trouble to our government we have borne this oppression but have now reached the limit of our endurance. We have a drought this year and our crops are not good and the locusts are destroying the little we have. The Russian soldiers forcibly take the provisions they need, giving only very small sum of

money in return. The owners of the farms and gardens are whipped and the crops and fruits taken away. In the name of God we ask your help. Signed by the merchants and priests, for all the inhabitants of Khoom." The paper adds: "The Persian Government is taking up with the Russian Government the matter of the depredations committed in Persia by the Russian army."[4]

The *Nobahar* of July 26, 1917 (No. 17) reports that the Russian army was pillaging the towns and villages of the country and the paper feared that the extent of the plunder would only increase. In its issue of August 18, 1917, the newspaper *Iran* states: "Again there is news from Kurdestan telling of the losses caused by the Russian army in all parts of that province. The people are again complaining and requesting assistance from the Government."[5] The *Zaban-e-Azad* of August 30, 1917 (No. 12), reports that Russian soldiers in Qazvin had looted many stores and had carried away goods worth 400,000 tomans. The paper quotes an eyewitness who says that store shelves had been emptied, and the few items left had been hidden by the storekeepers who feared Russian depredations. Orchards and vineyards had been emptied by the Russians who invariably beat up the owners and the cultivators. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 4, 1917 (No. 14), reports a confrontation between marauding Russian troops and inhabitants of Qazvin in which the Russians had fired on the people. The paper reports that the premises of Sayed Mohammad Razavizadeh, a local merchant, located next to the offices of the British Imperial Bank of Persia, had been looted and goods to the value of 1500 tomans taken. Following this incident, all merchants in Qazvin had closed shop and taken refuge in the telegraph office and had telegraphed the government in Tehran seeking help. The same issue of the paper reports on the scarcity of food in Zanjan and the recent entry of the Russian army into that town which had created great fear among the local inhabitants. The *Zaban-e-Azad* of September 18, 1917 (No. 20) reports that Russian officials in Manjil had gone to Tarom for the purpose of gathering grain, and had transported much to Zanjan for storage.

The *Iran* of November 2, 1917: "There is no safety in the city of Kazvin at the present time and the Russian soldiers there are causing a great deal of trouble, looting the bazaars etc." News from Hamadan: "two days ago a number of Russian soldiers plundered the shops in the bazaar." The *Settareh-e-Iran* of November 21, 1917 (No. 72) reports that the Russians in Hamadan were plundering the shops and taking goods without payment. In consequence, the shops and bazaar remained closed. In addition, because of

hunger and poverty, a mob had sacked and plundered numerous shops, taking goods, including opium and cash. The governor and the police had acted energetically in reopening the stores, and had laid up sufficient grain for the needs of the Russian soldiers and the people. But the price of wheat and barley had increased to 100 and 90 tomans per kharvar, respectively. The *Raad* of November 25, 1917: "After the evacuation of Van a great number of Russian soldiers came to Khoi. At that time the Russian Consul reported to the Kargozar that the troops would likely plunder Khoi and that he was unable to prevent them because there is no way to telegraph to Russia." The *Raad* of December 9, 1917, reports on the looting: "A telegram from Khoi states that the Russian army, having retired from Van, arrived at Khoi and plundered the whole bazaar and most of the houses." The news from Qazvin: "A special report states that Russian cavalrymen have stolen the Governmental mail outside this city and have also taken away 6000 tomans in cash."[6] The *Nobahar* of December 11, 1917 (No. 71) reports that the food shortage in Qazvin was very serious and hunger was on the rise. "The poor people are in great need, and their sufferings has been augmented by brigandage and depredations of the Russian troops."

The *Raad* of January 28, 1918, reports on the arrival of the Bolshevik envoy and the announcement of Russian troop withdrawal from Iran: "Mr. Bravine, the 'Russian Diplomatic Agent' of the Bolsheviks to the Court of Persia arrived on Saturday last at Teheran and has taken rooms at the Grand Hotel. Yesterday many of the inhabitants and representatives of the Democrats met him and congratulated him on his arrival." The paper also states: "The Foreign Office has been officially informed that all the Russian troops will leave Persia and necessary steps will be taken to prevent them from causing any trouble during the time they are passing through the country." But trouble they continued to cause. The same issue of *Raad* contains the following: "The Russian soldiers who were returning from Van entered the bazaar at Khoi, fired some shots and began looting the bazaar. The Russian Consul entered the bazaar with a number of Russian officers and drove the soldiers out, assuring the people that nothing further would happen. After an hour the soldiers reentered the bazaar and plundered until midnight, then set fire to the whole place." The *Raad* of January 29, 1918, reports on Rasht: "A number of Russian troops arrive at Resht each day from Kazvin. They sell all the goods they have stolen and buy rubles and cloth."[7]

The two press dispatches dated February 2, 1918, and February 27, 1918, contain much on Russian misbehavior in Iran. From the *Raad* of January 11, 1918: “The inhabitants of Siahdehah wire that the Russians who retire from Hamadan have totally looted them, killed one girl and two men and shot and wounded another girl. They were even taking away the governmental grain, and the people scatter, escaping to Kazvin and other places.” The *Raad* of January 16, 1918, states: “according to a special telegram, the Russians have sealed and confiscated all the grain stores of the people and government at Nehavand and plan to take them to Hamadan.” The same issue reports on Zanjan: “The Vice-Governor of Zanjan reports that the Russian soldiers are again troubling the people of the city and villages, and nothing in that district is safe.” The *Raad* of January 20, 1918, reports on Russian misdeeds: “When the Russians left Sennah (capital of Kurd-estan) they took away with them all the sheep and other animals they could get hold of.” Matters were no better in Qazvin: “There is a report from Kazvine to the effect that the Russian Consul there has brought under his own control the Persian Cossacks sent by the Persian Government to guard the city. Most of the inhabitants are armed to protect themselves.” The paper adds: “Many Russian soldiers arrive at Resht daily from Kazvin and other parts of Persia. They sell whatever they have and buy rubles, so that now horses are sold for eight to ten tomans each.”[8] The *Raad* of February 4, 1918, states: “A letter was written to the Russian Legation regarding the works of the Russian troops and their new organization in Kazvin, and their plundering at Tabriz, Zanjan, Hamadan, Kermanshah and other places. Long telegrams were also sent to Petrograd and Tiflis protesting against the actions of the Russians and asking their withdrawal from Persia.” In the press dispatch of February 27, 1918, the following is contained. The *Raad* of February 8, 1918, reports on Zanjan: “Long telegrams are being received from Zanjan saying that some 5,000 Russians are plundering the villages and assassinating the inhabitants. They also transgress the females.”[9] The same issue of the *Raad* adds: “It is reported from Soudj-Bulak that the Russian soldiers in that district have plundered the city and set it afire. The people rose against these invaders but after 12 Russians and 18 Persians had been killed affairs became more quiet for the time being. The Russians are interfering in all the Departments of the Government there.”[10]

## OTHER REPORTS OF RUSSIAN MISBEHAVIOR

The contemporaries placed much blame for the famine on foreign armies occupying Iran. In a report dated October 17, 1916, Caffrey blames the Russians and the Turks for the serious food situation and wheat shortage: "In ordinary years the Government receives a large percentage of its taxes in wheat, but this year very few taxes of any kind have been collected; also, the main regions from which the supplies of grain come, the districts of Hamadan, Sultanabad and Kermanshah, are now occupied by the Turks and therefore it is impossible to receive any wheat or barley from that part of the kingdom." He also adds: "The Russian and Turkish armies have also required a considerable quantity of provisions and have therefore been an additional cause of the depletion of the grain market." Nature had also contributed its share: "In addition to these causes, the wheat in the immediate vicinity of Teheran was considerably damaged by locusts and the yield has been very small." In conclusion: "The result of all this has been little bread and exorbitant prices."[11] An example of Turkish and Russian depredation was the successive looting of the town of Dolatabad by the two armies. The Reverend George F. Zoekler describes the actions of the Turkish army after it had recaptured Dolatbad in February 1917: "In spite of the fact, however, that the discipline of the Turks was excellent, they caused no end of hardship among the people. From the very first they began to gather up all the wheat and barley they could lay their hands on, and began shipping it away from here. A large part of this was forced from the people under the guise of 'contribution' to the cause. In places where people were reported to have anti-Turkish tendencies it was simply appropriated. Barns were broken open and emptied without any notice to the owner and without any accounting. Supplies of straw and hay were treated in the same way. Levies of woolen stockings, shirts, etc., were made upon the villages. Worthless Turkish money was floated here at face value and bought back again at less than half only to be again forced upon the people. All loads going from place to place were heavily taxed. All in all the country round about was pretty well stripped and had they stayed a tenth longer, this region would have been in a terrible plight." Zoekler also reports that after its evacuation by the Turks, the Russians had looted the bazaar.[12]

The Russians were also wreaking havoc in Mazandaran and Gilan. Ain-ol-Saltaneh reports that they were seizing all the rice they could get

hold of and shipping it to Russia. In addition, a huge fire in Amol had rendered 10,000 people homeless, and they had gathered outside of the town, hungry and in rags, awaiting government help. 200,000 sacks of rice and much merchandize was destroyed by fire. He adds that the British had promised to instruct their forces in Iran to refrain from purchasing grain and to help the country.[13] In the summer of 1917, Caldwell had taken a trip through northern Iran, stopping at Qazvin, Rasht and Enzeli. A telegram from Caldwell received on August 6, 1917, states: "Russian troops in Persia have pillaged and plundered the bazaars and stores in Hamedon, Kazbin, Urumia and other Persian cities. In some instances bazaars were burned… The Persian Government has again asked the withdrawal of all Russian forces from Persia."[14] He provides additional details in a dispatch of the same date: "In each of these cities there are numerous Russian troops, but disorder seems to prevail among them. No soldier salutes a military officer and disobedience in general prevails." He reports on a mutiny: "A party of a thousand soldiers recently brought from Baku to serve on the Turkish frontier between Kermanshah and Bagdad, on reaching Resht and learning whither they were being sent, refused to proceed farther. This is but one of many similar incidents." He informs on looting by Russian soldiers: "In this connection I may refer to my telegram modri and may add that millions of dollars worth of property have been stolen, burned and destroyed in the looting of the bazaars in different Persian cities by the Russian soldiers." Caldwell encloses a report by Consul Paddock on conditions in Azerbaijan in which it is reported that on Friday, July 6, 1917, "the bazaar in the city of Urumiah was looted and burned by the Russian soldiers." Paddock adds that the situation in the city was "one of complete disorder". Paddock concludes: "The cossack troops have been sent to the front from here, to Souj-Bulak I hear, and the remaining Russian soldiers, while showing no signs of such serious indiscipline as existed at Urumiah, appear rather a disorganized lot."[15]

Describing the extent of the famine in the fall of 1917, Caldwell declares: "The presence of large numbers of foreign troops in Persia is said to be responsible in part at least for this state of affairs."[16] In an entry in his diary dated, Monday, November 19, 1917, Mohammad Vali Khan Sepahsalar Tonekaboni, former Prime Minister, writes: "The Russian army, or what remains of it, is busy plundering and destroying. There is total lack of discipline and the officers have lost control. There are 50,000 Russian

troops in Kurdistan, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Zanjan and Qazvin, and another 10,000 in Rasht, and these unwelcome guests have to be fed in the midst of famine."[17] In a dispatch dated January 15, 1918, entitled "Famine Conditions," Caldwell writes: "There is a great deal of suffering throughout the whole country, as is shown by the accompanying extracts from letters. The presence of lawless Russian troops who plundered and confiscated at will all grain and food supplies in Kermanshah, Hamadan, Sultanabad, Resht, Kazvin, Meshed, the cities and villages of Azerbaijan and the surrounding country, has been responsible for the hoarding by the producers of the small quantities of grain harvested last season, thus making the prices enormous."[18] In his report dated January 9, 1918, Paddock also stresses the role of the Russians in this tragedy: "Wheat and barley commandeered and that consumed by the Russian military forces have also had a large influence on prices by reducing the available supply and, as remarked by Dr. Shedd of the Urumia district, military methods have frightened holders into hiding their stocks of grain. The [Russian] military recently went so far as to seal most of the grain stores, even government stocks, in the Maragha district to the south, and the important grain district of Hashteri to the south-east of Tabriz. It was believed that this was preliminary to shipping much of the needed wheat from this impoverished country to Russia, as more was sequestered than the army here could have consumed, and the representations made to the Russian Consul-General here by his colleagues, including myself, and by the Persian authorities, of course, but he admitted that he was powerless to intervene in Russian military matters as now conducted. As a matter of fact, however, it is known that little if any has been exported, and it is probable that with the withdrawal of the Russian forces from this province this wheat will be liberated for local consumption, and that other grain will find its way to town. For some time the Russian military organization has shipped comparatively large numbers of cattle from this region, destined for the use of the army on the Caucasus frontier. This has perhaps been a benefit to the peasant community, who are not accustomed to eating meat, for it has economized the grain these cattle would otherwise have eaten, and has paid the peasants in ready money more than they would have received in ordinary times. It is a fact, nevertheless, that the country is suffering through lack of a really sufficient existing quantity of grain."[19]

The Russians had inflicted a great deal of damage in Hamadan and vicinity. In an entry in the early spring in 1918, Ain-ol-Saltaneh writes: "Darvish-Ali Hamedani and his brother, together with their families have come to Alamut in rags and starving. He was a reputable merchant who every year brought goods and bought hides in return. Now he is destitute. He says the Russians plundered their village and took all he had."[20] In his report on the famine in west Iran, Francis White also blames the Russians: "There seems to be no question but that the Russians behaved in a most contemptible manner in all places occupied by them in Persia. Every village between Kasr-i-Shirin and Kazvin bears grim testimony to their conduct. They are reported to have looted and plundered everything obtainable. Rather than take the trouble to go into the country and on the surrounding hills to collect firewood, the Russian soldiers pulled down the beams and rafters and other woodwork of the houses and burned them, so that the road is lined with demolished, and in many cases, abandoned villages as though a scourge had passed over them. The people have been robbed of all they possessed and this, coupled with the drought last year, has left them in a starving, famished condition."[21] On the Russian occupation of Iran, Southard expresses a similar opinion: "The Russians, of all the invading forces, seem to have done the Persians the most harm. Along the Bagdad-Caspian line may still be seen many abandoned villages and demolished houses resulting from the Russian occupation. There is very little firewood in the country and the Russian troops are said to have taken for firewood the roofing, window and door frames, and other wooden parts of the huts of the Persian peasants. In doing this, the house was, of course, made uninhabitable and as some of the destruction occurred in winter the peasants thus deprived of shelter had a very hard time of it and many died. The Russians are also said to have taken all of the food to be found, to have killed domestic animals kept for breeding purposes, to have eaten up the small stocks of seed grain in the winter of 1916-17, and in general to have been largely responsible in this way for the serious famine which occurred in that part of Persia last winter. The Russians in general seem to have behaved very badly in Persia and their treatment of their own equipment and of the American Mission hospital at Hamadan is referred to in my despatch No. 7 of September 4, 1918."[22]

On December 23, 1917, the Iranian Foreign Ministry had sent a protest note to the Russian legation, and a copy had been given to Caldwell. In

sending a copy of the note, the foreign minister, Ala-os-Saltaneh writes: “I beg to attract your attention to the losses caused to Persia and its inhabitants by the presence of these foreign troops, and also to point out that the Persian Government considers those who are the cause of it responsible for the happenings and losses occasioned.” The note to the Russian legation complains of the “storing of food for the soldiers”: “As you are well aware, in order to keep our neutrality, I have often notified your Excellency, and especially of late, of the losses which are caused to Persia and the Persians by the stay of the Russian army in this country; the limitless murders; the plundering which takes place every day; the storing up of foodstuffs for the soldiers when such foodstuffs are sorely needed by the people; and even transgressions to the females; all of which have been taking place wherever there were Russian soldiers—Urumiah, Khoi, Salmas, Soudj-Bulagh, Kazvin, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kurdestan etc. etc.” It ends: “I especially mentioned in my letter of Shaval 9th last that some fear exists that the people will rise against this oppression by the Russians, and my government be not able to stand against the feelings of the people. Information has now been received to the effect that the inhabitants of Astara are armed to protect themselves. Although the Persian Government can stop personal interference by these people, it is quite sure that unless the Russian Legation or those in charge of the Russian military affairs take more effective steps to stop the transgressions of the soldiers and army, events will be brought about which will be beyond the power of my government to stop. For this reason I again request you urgently to cooperate with me to put an end to these happenings and secure orders for the return of the Russian army from Persia, or the Persian Government does not consider itself responsible for any bad result by the inspiration of the people, and, as has often been brought to your notice since the beginning of the war, the trespassers are responsible for all material and essential losses to Persia and the Persian people.”[23] Another note (no date given) to the Russian legation from the Iranian government contains the following: “although famine rages in all parts of Persia, the Bolsheviki are demanding to requisition foodstuffs from Persia, and are threatening that in case of refusal to comply with their demands they will enter upon violent activities.”[24]

## CAMPAIGN TO BLAME THE RUSSIANS

There can be no doubt that the Russians were responsible for the destruction wrought on western Iran and bore responsibility for the famine and suffering. We know that at its height in the summer of 1916, there were 100,000 Russian troops in Iran and that by the summer of 1917, 75,000 Russian troops remained in western Iran. They were gone by March 1918, but the famine had endured well into 1919. Why was there a vicious famine in northern Khorassan which had seen no fighting? Why was there a famine in south Iran which had been under British occupation since 1915-16. We know that the harvest of 1918 was one of the largest on record. Why had the famine endured until the harvest of 1919? Why had Gilan plunged into a famine in the summer of 1918, that is after it was occupied by the British? Why did the famine persist in the region of Iran that bordered Mesopotamia which was under British rule and where there was ample grain? And similarly, why was there a famine in the south-eastern region of Iran which was under British military occupation and adjacent to British India where there was ample grain. Clearly, the Russians were not the sole culprits. From the beginning, the British had conducted a campaign to blame the Russians and to exonerate themselves. For instance, a report filed by the American consul in Baghdad is illustrative. In a dispatch dated June 11, 1918, Consul Oscar Heizer writes: “I have the honor to enclose herewith copy of a report made by a person who has just returned to Bagdad from the neighboring Persian provinces.” Although not mentioned, it is clear that Heizer’s friend was a British official. The report entitled “The Situation in Persia” is given in full:

A friend who recently returned from Kermanshah, Persia, reported the following situation prevailing since several months in those districts.

Owing to the consecutive Turkish and Russian occupation last year, no agricultural operations were carried through. On one side the ill-treatment by the invaders who used to force on the public their depreciated paper currency, and on the other side the lack of supplies, created in Kermanshah a situation unprecedented for a long time in its history. Soldiers and even officers inspired such a degree of terror, that often shops containing foodstuffs were closed as soon as these came in sight. Starvation reached such a degree that every day several dead were picked up in the streets not only in Kermanshah, but in all of the towns of the district. The trade was

also very bad as goods could only be imported overland through Amara and Pushti-Kuh incurring very heavy and unusual expenses.

The British penetration brought important improvement in the situation of the suffering population. In the first place large numbers of poor persons were called by the British Labor Corps to work in the building of roads and other military works. They were liberally paid and food was freely supplied to them. By this means, roads between Khanakin and Kermanshah which were absolutely impassable owing to mountainous country, were brought into good condition with motor cars of every size circulating easily. The British Government also allowed the export to Persia of an important supply of grain which greatly relieved the situation and she opened for trade the Bagdad Kermanshah road. For the present only tea, sugar, coffee, and other limited and specified articles are prohibited for export [to Persia] but this restriction is also expected to be removed.

The harvest this year seems to be a promising one and everything foreshadows a good coming year for these neighboring provinces of Persia.[25]

The campaign to blame the Russians was not confined to diplomatic dispatches. On the famine in Hamadan, Donohoe writes: “One of the contributory causes of the Hamadan famine was the insane behaviour of the Russian Army when in occupation of the town and district. They destroyed the growing crops of wheat and barley, and wantonly wasted the grain they were unable to consume or carry off. The Hamadan harvest is not ripe for gathering until about the first week in July, so the British, in May, were faced with the problem of feeding a starving population for some sixty days. It was not incumbent upon them to do so, but both pity and policy coincided in indicating the necessity for combating the evil of food shortage that was so rapidly thinning the population.”[26] Describing the sixty-mile stretch from Karind to Kermanshah, Donohoe writes: “The whole land had been skinned bare of supplies by Turk and Russians, and it was now in the throes of famine.” He adds: “there was a good deal of similarity in the methods of these successive invaders. They commandeered unscrupulously and without payment, and what they could not consume or carry off they destroyed. There was no seed wheat, and consequently no crops had been sown. Many tillers of the soil had fled for their lives; those who remained

were dying of hunger in this war-ravaged region. The arable land which is noted for its fertility was forlorn and neglected; no plough had touched its soil since the passing of the war storm, and its abandoned furrows were temporarily tenanted by wandering crows struggling to gain a precarious livelihood."[27]

Interestingly, Sykes also claims that the famine was really caused by the actions of the Russians during their withdrawal from Iran: "The Russians, before leaving the trenches, sold ammunition and equipment to the Turks, and then marched north, plundering and pulling down houses as they went, in order to secure food and fuel." Since the Turks had left Iran in March 1917, it is difficult to see how the Russians sold equipment and arms to them. Sykes then quotes from a letter he had received from a friend at Tabriz. His friend wrote: "The Russian soldiers wandered through here in their thousands, sold their rifles, ammunition, stores, horses, and, in fact, anything that would fetch money. Horses went for a few shillings, but fodder has been at such a terribly high price that beasts were dear as gifts." Sykes then states the following on the famine: "Western and Northwestern Persia, indeed, paid a heavy price for the helplessness of its Government. Famine conditions prevailed throughout the country, which had been denuded of supplies and livestock."[28]

Not surprisingly, while the British were anxious to publicize the misbehavior of the Russians, they were anxious to conceal their own part. The *Iran* newspaper in its issue of September 21, 1917, describes the looting and the seizure of the food supplies by the South Persia Rifles in the villages of Yazd: "It is reported from Yezd that a few days ago the force of the South Persia Rifles surrounded the village of Dehieh, bombarded and looted it and took three persons as prisoners. The four hundred families of the village are now in great need of bread."[29] The behavior of the British army in Abadeh in Fars had been no better. On August 28, 1918, the *Iran* reports: "Letters which have recently been received from the South relate that 1,500 Indian cavalrymen have arrived at Abadeh and will apparently remain there. It is stated that they have confiscated much property in the neighboring villages and districts."[30]

## CAMPAIGN TO BLAME THE IRANIAN DEMOCRATS

In the British scheme of things, next to the Russians, the Iranian democrats and landowners were most responsible for the famine. The extreme hostility of the British to Iranian democrats can be seen from this outburst by Donohoe: "The Democrats laid claim to represent the intelligentzia of North-Eastern Persia. Their profession of political faith was, broadly, 'Persia for the Persians,' the abolition of all foreign meddling in Persian affairs, and the ending of the Russian and British spheres of influence. But it was against the British that their virulent hatred and political conspiracies were chiefly directed… The great majority of the Democrats, as I found them, put pul (i.e. money) before patriotism, and for them a Turkish lira, or a twenty-mark piece, had an irresistible attraction."[31] In April 1918, Donohoe had spoken to the governor of Karind who had expressed sorrow for the death of so many villagers from starvation, but in the opinion of the Englishman, "he himself had done nothing to lessen the ravages of famine in his district, and was content to see the wretched inhabitants die, without moving a finger to help them. His attitude was typical of officialdom throughout this starving land. The Governor was a landowner, and probably, like others of his class whom I came across later in Kermanshah and Hamadan, had plenty of grain hidden away waiting for the day when the British Commissariat, in order to feed starving Persians, would come and buy it at inflated prices, thus enriching a gang of hoarding, avaricious rascals… [H]ere, as elsewhere during my wanderings through Iran, I was painfully impressed by the appalling callousness and indifference exhibited by the ordinary Persians towards the sufferings of his own people. He would not lift a hand to help a dying man, and dead, would leave him to the tender mercies of the dogs and vultures rather than trouble to give him burial."[32] Donohoe would even have us believe that the famine was a Democratic conspiracy: "Some of the people, who did not share the noble view of the Democrats that the poor should starve rather than that cornered wheat should be released, went to the telegraph office with the intention of informing the weak and incapable Teheran Government of the true state of affairs." He claims: "But the Democrats would have none of that; it might upset their carefully laid schemes for enrichment at the expense of the flesh and blood of their fellows… It was reported that there was plenty of wheat stored in private houses, and it was urged that severe measures should be taken against the hoarders… By a ruse de guerre the grain owners were induced to disgorge some of their hoarded stocks. Telegrams purposely

written en clair which passed between Bagdad and Hamadan made it appear that large supplies of wheat were being forwarded from Mesopotamia, whereupon the local Hamadan hoarders rushed into the market and sold readily at daily diminishing rates, until something like normal prices were reached once more. And so the bottom fell out of the wheat ring."[33]

At Hamadan, the headquarters of Dunsterville, the situation was very delicate. After being chased out of Rasht by the Jangalis in early 1918, Dunsterville had established himself at Hamadan where he was "in the midst of a more or less hostile population of about 70,000, one-fourth of whom were Turks or of Turkish origin and sympathies, the remaining being Persian, with a small sprinkling of Jews and Armenians… Hamadan was at once the foyer of Turkish espionage and of Persian intrigue. The moribund association of local Democrats, merchants and grain-growers, had been largely galvanized into anti-British activity by Kuchik Khan, whose army of Jungalis still barred the road from Manjil to the Caspian Sea. The Hamadan Democrats were 'pure patriots,' who talked glibly in the local tea-houses of the blessing of political freedom, cursed the British as mischievous, evil-minded interlopers, and called upon Allah to bless their deliberations and rid them of the British oppressor. Incidentally, they would meet in secret conclave and decree a further increase in grain prices, which meant a substantial gain to themselves. Supplies were refused to the British except at very exorbitant rates; the profiteers waxed fat and became more insolent; and the poor of Hamadan were left to die in hunger, victims of Persian cupidity and Persian indifference. Pamphlets, inflammatory in tone, and bearing the imprimatur of the principal democratic club, were distributed broadcast in the streets, and from these the victims of famine had at all events the ante-mortem satisfaction of learning that it was the British who were deliberately starving them to death in order that these beardless intruders might the more easily overrun the whole land of Persia… An ukase would go forth from Kuchik Khan that there was to be a truce to temporizing, and that the Dunsterforce must be sent without delay to the Jehannam of Unbelievers… I always did, and always shall, admire the wonderful patience and clemency exercised by Dunsterville when faced with the Democratic organization which aimed at nothing short of wiping out both himself and his force in Hamadan, if not by tour de force, then by starvation. They were always inciting the populace to rise and finish us. But hungry men have little stomach for blood-letting, and although those in

Hamadan found it difficult enough to exist owing to the food shortage, they were in no hurry to abridge their unhappy days by flinging themselves on British bayonets. The Hun or the Turk would have ended this intolerable situation long ago by decorating Hamadan lamp-posts with the dangling bodies of the local Democrats; but Dunsterville was forbidden to embark upon any strong measures."[34]

British-style famine relief consisted of setting up "road gangs," laborers who were employed by the British to build roads, and in exchange, a laborer was paid 4 krans per day. At first 3,000 persons were employed. For this purpose a daily allowance of £400 was made by the British, believing that this sum "would sensibly alleviate the prevailing distress." The author immediately adds: "But we did not reckon upon Persian avarice, selfishness, and untrustworthiness of character… No Persian for very long can keep his itching fingers from other people's money." The price of bread continued to increase because of greater money circulating and chasing bread. And besides, paying a wage to men did not guarantee that the money would reach women and children because Persian "men did not always bother to buy bread for their starving dependents, preferring to dissipate their earnings in a nightly carouse in an opium den—the local equivalent to a British gin palace." The "solution" was to give part cash (2 krans per day per worker) and part food to the workers by setting up soup kitchens. Up to 2,000 workers per day were fed in this way. Given that the population of Hamadan was 70,000, of whom at least 15,000 were on the verge of starvation, feeding 2,000, or less than 3-4% could hardly be called "famine relief."[35]

It is very clear that the British had used the famine and their small scale famine relief to weaken the Democrats in Hamadan: "It was not at all to their [Democrats] liking that the detested British interloper was filling the empty stomachs of the people gratis. In such circumstances they could not be expected to revolt and join hands with the Democrats, and besides, if this free distribution of food was not stopped, it would be a bad day for the wheat-trust and inflated grain prices. So they set to work and issued broadcast handbills warning the poor against partaking of British soup, on the ground that it was heavily flavoured with poison. It was part of another 'deep-laid plot,' they said, to kill off all the Hamadani whom the ravages of famine had so far overlooked." Donohoe continues: "The average Persian peasant is an ignorant and gullible individual as a rule, but this time the

Democrats overshot the mark and their assertions were too much even for Persian credulity. The hungry people came and ate. The second and succeeding days they came in thousands. Barricades and armed soldiers were required to prevent their storming the distribution centres and carrying off all the available supply. And, to the dismay and horror of all good Democrats, not a single one died from poisoning. This was the deathblow to the prestige of the Democratic movement. It lost its grip on the people." Donohoe claims that in their anger the Democrats "plucked their beards and tore their garments, exclaiming in accents of sorrow and humiliation, "Alas, what ashes have fallen on our heads today!" The author describes the alleged Democratic response: "But they rallied in their last ditch, and made an eleventh-hour attempt to avert the consequences of the moral defeat which had overtaken them. Kuchik Khan, the 'Robin Hood' of the Caspian Marshes, yielding to Democratic pleadings, and in the hope of possibly discrediting British famine relief work, sent fifteen mule-loads of rice to Hamadan to be sold for the benefit of the poor. But Kuchik's agents had seized the rice without payment from growers living in his 'protected area,' so he was able to play the merry game of robbing the Persian Peter in order to comfort the Persian Paul." The author concludes: "The artifice was too thin. Hamadan was not deluded. The British were de facto masters of the situation. They had conquered the people of Hamadan not by the sword and halter of the Turk who had preceded them, but by the modern adaptation of the miracle of loaves and fishes."[36]

The campaign to blame the Iranians for the famine was not without success, and some newspapers had followed the line. For instance, the *Raad* of October 3, 1919 (No. 147) comments on the causes of the recent famine. It writes that it is commonly believed that the famine was caused by an inclement nature and the world crisis. But that is wrong, it claims, adding: "The famine was only caused by the corruption and neglect of those in power. To benefit from a shortage, they delayed the transport of grain from the countryside to the cities; they closed their eyes to the pilfering by the village foremen and stewards and failed to hold them to account. To gain a profit, they did not hesitate to sacrifice thousands of innocent people. Unmoved by the sight of the dead and dying in the streets and in front of the mosques, they only thought of their personal gains. Consequently, wheat rose to 150 to 200 tomans and the famine got worse. Anarchy reigned and officials only thought of personal gain. There was a bureau of bakeries in

existence with its own offices in town but it was for naught, and its officials were busy with intrigue and conspiracy."

## THE FAMINE IN FARS

As above noted, the famine in Fars had been particularly severe. In a lengthy speech on the famine and adoption of measures to relieve the same in Shiraz, the governor-general of Fars, Prince Abdol Hossein Farman-Farma, blames the famine on internal strife and warfare as well as on acts of nature—drought and locust. His speech includes the following: "My brothers, I want you to know that this hardship and suffering, this scarcity and famine and drought, is not confined to Shiraz, but in all of Persia there is famine and high prices, as is known by anyone who has been in communication with the other parts of the country. But for obvious reasons, it is especially acute in Shiraz and Fars. The locust infestation of the past several years, these domestic discords, rebellions and civil wars, all of which have greatly damaged food cultivation and production. For example, war has broken out between two different branches of the Kashgai or the Khamseh tribes. One seizes the other's oxen, while the other seizes the property of his foe. In response, one destroys the others crop, and in response the harvest belonging to the other is torched. This has continued until we find ourselves in such a predicament. Perhaps a handful of individuals, no more than three or four, have been strong enough to protect their property and crops. But for every four people who so succeeded, one hundred others saw their property plundered and destroyed. In Kermanshahan, practically every village has been destroyed. Villages that had housed five hundred households and even one thousand families are now in utter ruin. Even the doors and wooden beams were taken for firewood or for the construction of defensive positions. In regions where ample harvest existed, today a live cow is not to be found. The situation in Fars is made worse by the drought, the locust and the internal upheavals and tribal discords."[37] The famine in Fars clearly shows that the Russians had not been the sole culprits. There were no Russian or Turkish forces in Fars. Fars had been under British military occupation since March-April 1916. The role of the British in the famine had remained concealed to many contemporaries.

# NOTES

1. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, p. 102.
2. Dunsterville, *Adventures of Dunsterforce*, pp. 107-112.
3. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered), 891.00/909, May 24, 1917.
4. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered), 891.00/914, June 7, 1917.
5. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered) and enclosure, 891.00/917, August 27, 1917.
6. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered), 891.00/945, December 26, 1917.
7. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered) and enclosures, 891.00/962, February 2, 1918.
8. Caldwell, dispatch (unnumbered) and enclosures, 891.00/962, February 2, 1918.
9. Caldwell, 891.00/1001 1/2, February 27, 1918
10. Caldwell, 891.00/1001 1/2, February 27, 1918.
11. Caffery, dispatch 246, 891.5017/5, October 17, 1916.
12. Caldwell, dispatch 307 and enclosure, 763.72/6879, July 12, 1917.
13. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, Vol. 6, p. 4777, cited in Abadian, p. 197.
14. Caldwell, telegram, 891/00/913, August 6, 1917.
15. Caldwell, dispatch 314 and enclosure, 891.00/919, August 6, 1917.
16. Caldwell, dispatch 330, 891.48/31, October 4, 1917.
17. *Diaries of Mohammad Vali Khan Tonekaboni*, pp. 346-347.
18. Caldwell, dispatch 353 and enclosures, 891.48/59, January 15, 1918.
19. Caldwell, dispatch 359 and enclosures, 891.48/58, January 21, 1918.
20. Ain-ol-Saltaneh, Vol. 7, p. 5227, cited in Abadian, p. 197.
21.Caldwell, dispatch 385 and enclosure, 891.00/1008, May 13, 1918.
22. Southard, dispatch 1, 891.00/1054, September 2, 1918.
23. Caldwell, dispatch 350 and enclosures, 763.72111/6987, December 26, 1917.
24. Nabil-ed-Dowleh to Lansing, note 177 and enclosures, 763.72111/7190, October 5, 1918.
25. Heizer, dispatch 104 and enclosure, 891.00/1016, June 11, 1918.
26. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, p. 122.
27. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 92-93.
28. Sykes, *History of Persia*, pp. 486-487.

29. Caldwell, dispatch, 891.00/920, October 4, 1917.

30. Caldwell, press dispatch and enclosures, 891.00/1084, October 26, 1918.

31. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 68-69.

32. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 83-90.

33. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 127-128.

34. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 116-121.

35. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 123-126.

36. Donohoe, *Persian Expedition*, pp. 126-127.

37. Hafez Farman-Farmaian, “Farmanfarma and the Famine of 1917 in Shiraz,” p. 11.

## *Chapter Eight*

# Versailles and the Onset of the Cover-up

Faced with genocide and the political and financial strangulation of their country, Iranians had looked to America for support. In a dispatch of September 2, 1918, Southard writes: "The Persians in general have apparently always had the greatest of good feelings towards the United States, but when our country came into the war as a so-called ally of Russia and Great Britain there was, on account of Persian dislike for those two countries, some feeling that the United States in joining them had lost a right to the high regard and consideration which the Persians had previously felt. This tendency was, of course, seized upon by enemy propagandists and in a subtle and secret way a feeling was developed among some of the more radical Persian Democrats that was akin to real ill-will. Happily the development of any permanent feeling of this sort failed, and I believe that there is now no real ill-will against the United States on the part of any of the leading Persian officials or politicians. In fact a tendency is developing to look more towards the United States as the only power which can aid Persia to a place at the Peace Conference, which the Persians consider is their only hope to secure a full and impartial reparation for the injuries the country has suffered from invasions by belligerent powers during this war… It may be accurately said that the one and predominating thought of all Persian patriots concerned in the government of their country, is that they may be able to maintain friendly relations with all of the belligerent powers and to gain a place at the great Peace Conference, and that the latter at least can be accomplished by the influence of the United States. Most of the Persians feel that Russia and Great Britain would oppose their having a place at the Peace Conference and if British control of the cabinet at Teheran continues the Persian government may be prevented from expressing its real desires in the matter."[1]

In November 1918, an American famine relief commission had arrived in Iran and their reception is described by White in a dispatch of January 10, 1919: “The very friendly feelings of Persians of all classes towards the United States and Americans was most strikingly shown by the very enthusiastic and hearty welcome given by the great and small alike to the American Persian Relief Commission headed by Dr. H. P. Judson, President of the University of Chicago, which arrived in Teheran on the first of November. Everyone vied with one another in doing them honor. They were received by His Majesty several times during their stay of one month. The first dinner ever given to foreigners in the Medjliss building was given in their honor by the members of parliament for Teheran. The Chamber of Commerce and many other organizations and individuals entertained them most hospitably. The spontaneity of their reception could not be doubted.” White adds: “As stated in last quarter’s report the Persians, due to their long standing hatred of Russia and their more lately acquired hostility to Great Britain, have not been very favorable to the Allies during the war.” But with America things were different. On Iranian-American relations, White writes: “Persia places great confidence in the United States and looks to her for help and assistance at the peace conference. In order to bring her position more clearly before the American Government and people it was decided to send a mission to the United States headed by Motamin-ol-Molk. The definite arrangements with regard to this mission have not yet been made but it is hoped that it can start shortly.”[2] The special mission had never left. The reasons are given in a follow-up report from White dated April 4, 1919: “It would seem to be almost certain now that it was the British Legation which prevented the Persian Commission mentioned in the last quarterly report from going to the United States as it did not want to carry on propaganda in America and arouse sympathy for Persia or make Persia’s case more fully known there. Great Britain would appear to desire the Persians to look only to her for help and assistance. As a matter of fact the British Minister told a prominent Zoroastrian merchant, Khaikosrow Shahrokh, that Great Britain is the only country which was really helping Persia and stated that in any business dealings which he had abroad he should remember this and do nothing which was not to Great Britain’s benefit. At the same time travel facilities were withheld from him seemingly only because the British Legation thought that he was going to America for political purposes or at

least with the mission of bringing out a financial adviser for the Persian Government."[3]

On financial reform and employment of an American financial adviser, Southard writes: "In this connection it may be remarked that many of the Persian officials with whom I talked emphasized the need for a thorough reform of Persia's financial system in all its branches, and expressed their great regret that Mr. Shuster had not been able to carry on the work after having begun it. The plan of the Persians is now to arrange for American financial advisers again to take up this work, and I was directly informed by members of the present Persian cabinet that the Ministers expected very soon to take up this matter. They felt that with Russia out of the way no objection would be made, as happened in the case of Mr. Shuster. Judging from the proprietary and somewhat domineering attitude towards the Persian government by the British Legation at Teheran I am inclined to the opinion that the British would object to financial advisers from America or from any other country other than Great Britain." Southard observes: "The first step in the rehabilitation of Persia would seem to be a reorganization and purification of its financial system, and as has already been stated a considerable number of the more patriotic professional officials at Teheran are seriously considering the matter." On Shuster, he adds: "Mr. Shuster, the American financial adviser who was in Persia, is well and favorably remembered and has left with many Persians a very high regard for American ability. On the other hand the Bakhtiaris, who are influential in Teheran politics, are said to have developed a permanent dislike for all Americans because Mr. Shuster, an American, very nearly ruined their much loved practice of grafting upon and looting their government and people in general."[4] The subject of American financial advisers is also taken up by White: "Since the end of the war more thought has been given to the regeneration of Persia and all seem to turn instinctively to America for help and advisers and technical experts to assist in the rebuilding of the country. The relations of the United States with Persia have always been most friendly and disinterested so that America enjoys a great prestige with the Persians. All seem anxious to cultivate still closer relations with the United States and I understand that at a meeting of the leading Teheran merchants held in the bazaar a short time ago it was decided to try to extend their commercial relations with America."[5]

Finally, with America's help, Iran hoped for a place at the peace conference and a measure of compensation for the damages suffered during the war: "With the war over Persia now desires to gain as much as possible for herself from the peace settlement. For this end a meeting was held in November of all former cabinet ministers under the presidency of the Prime Minister and the eight desiderata above mentioned were agreed upon. A delegation to be sent to the peace conference was chosen by the Shah and quickly sent off on December 17th to try to obtain these ends. Persia considers that she has a right to be represented at the peace conference even though other neutrals may not be admitted, as she has suffered so much during the war from the various foreign armies which have invaded her territory. Great damage was done by the Russian and Turkish armies in their various advances and retreats through Persia and she now wants compensation for the damage done and guarantees that such a state of affairs will not recur in the future."[6] It is abundantly clear that the refusal to give Iran admission to the peace conference and to grant it a hearing was part of a cover up of the Great Famine in which all the Great Powers willingly participated.

## IRAN REFUSED A HEARING AT VERSAILLES

Iran's delegation to the peace conference at Versailles was headed by Mochaverol-Mamalek, the foreign minister, and Mirza Hussein Khan Ala, former minister of agriculture, and Mohammad Ali Foroughi Zoka-ol-Molk, former minister of justice. In discussing the composition of the mission, Francis White had expressed a great deal of reservation because both Mochaver-ol-Mamalek and Ala were considered to be violently anti-British, and in his opinion, conflict with the British at Versailles was inevitable and to the detriment of Iran. In the concluding part of a long and most interesting telegram dated January 9, 1919, White writes: "Persia has suffered greatly in the last few years from her neighbors and now is her unique chance of getting on her feet again. To do so however she must have outside assistance presumably from the Allies. Therefore in view of the decided lukewarmness of the French Government towards receiving any Persian Mission at the Peace Conference and the unfavorable report sent to his government by the French Minister regarding Mochaverol Mamalek and the fact that Marling is in London for conference on Persian affairs and dislikes Hussein Khan as

much as latter dislikes him and will doubtless make an unsympathetic report on him I considered as unfortunate for Persia that such a selection of delegates should have been made. It is now fait accompli however and I trust it may be found possible for the American delegates to further their wishes and guide them to a satisfactory settlement of the Persian question."[7]

It turned out that White's misgivings were unjustified. It made no difference as to who was on the mission. Great Britain refused to allow the Iranian delegates to attend the peace conference or to gain a hearing. It is also clear that the United States made no real attempt to aid Iran get admission. To begin with, the British had prevailed on President Woodrow Wilson not to receive the Iranian delegation. In a letter to the American ambassador in London, dated of September 11, 1919, Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, writes: "when I was in Paris some time ago I called on Colonel House especially to mention to him the nature of the negotiations in which I was engaged, and I had asked him to inform President Wilson on the matter so that the President might be guided in his attitude towards the Persian delegation at Paris should their claim to be heard at the Peace Conference be entertained. That Colonel House undertook this mission is certain because at a later date in London he informed me that he had carried it out and had informed the President of what I had said."[8] Soon after the conclusion of the peace conference, the US Secretary of State Lansing had claimed that he had tried to get Iranians a hearing, but was prevented by the British. In a telegram of August 20, 1919, addressed to the American ambassador in London, Lansing wrote: "In Paris I asked of Mr. Balfour three times that the Persians have an opportunity to be heard before the Council of Foreign Ministers because of their claims and boundaries and because their territory had been a battle ground. Mr. Balfour was rather abrupt in refusing to permit them to have a hearing."[9]

Having been refused a hearing at Versailles, in March 1919, the Iranian delegation to the peace conference had put out a 14-page document signed by Mochaver-ol-Mamalek bearing the title "Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris." A copy of the document is supplied by White and his comments are included in a long and most interesting dispatch.[10] In supplying a copy of the document to the State Department, White states: "The copy of Persia's claims enclosed herewith is, so far as I know, the first and only one to arrive in Persia. The present cabinet had not seen the claims until I showed this copy to some of its

members and they, as well as members of former cabinets of opposing political parties, seemed certainly surprised that such immoderate claims had been made by the Persian Mission in Paris." It is abundantly clear that a purpose of this ridiculous document was to compromise and jeopardize the real and justified claims of Iran. By mixing a heavy dose of mendacity and falsification with the demands and grievances of Iran, the intention was to discredit Iran and weaken her case. And it succeeded admirably. Iran got nothing out of the peace conference. In addition, the document aims at exonerating the British: Great Britain is hardly mentioned in the document.

I have discussed elsewhere at length the political and military claims made in the document.[11] Suffice it to say that the document gives a completely distorted and inaccurate account of the military events in Iran during World War I. In its version of the military events, the British invasions of Iran are not even mentioned. Nor is there any mention of the South Persia Rifles. The principal political demand in the document is the "annulment" of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 that had divided Iran into "spheres of influence" and a "neutral zone." However, with the Russian Revolution and the demise of Tsarist Russia, the August 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention as well as the March 1915 secret agreement between Russia and Great Britain redividing Iran, had been de facto annulled and rendered moot. Having occupied all of Iran, including the previously neutral zone where the oilfields were located, as well as the former Russian zone, Great Britain had no intention of resuscitating the 1907 convention and thereby allowing Russia back into Iran, and evacuating the oil fields. The entire demand about the cancellation of the 1907 convention was really a red herring. Little wonder that Great Britain had so readily accepted the "annulment" of the 1907 convention. Equally absurd were Iran's ridiculous territorial claims: all of Kurdistan east of the Euphrates, all of Transcaucasia south of Derbend; practically all of Transcaspia, including all of Turkomanistan, thereby turning the Caspian Sea into a Persian lake, and effectively doubling the geographic size of Iran. In contrast, Iran's real legitimate claims to the islands in the Persian Gulf, to the Suleimanieh region of Mesopotamia, and to such cities as Sarakhs and Nakhchevan are not even mentioned. As noted by White, these "preposterous" territorial claims only served to compromise and weaken the true claims of Iran. By this ridiculous document, Iran's just demands were sold down the River Seine.

# IRAN'S ALLEGED ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES

The distortions and outright falsehoods contained in Iran's Versailles document extend to the statement of Iran's economic grievances and claims. On Iran's trade and commercial grievances, the document contains the following: "The Customs Convention concluded between Russia and Persia in 1901 has been conceived with the double object of suppressing the export of Persian-made commodities and barring Persia from the commerce of other countries." It adds: "Persian industry has thereby declined more and more and the Russians have succeeded in their policy of Persia's economic isolation to such an extent that they would not even permit the transit of goods through the Caucasus. The latest Customs tarif [sic] was so prejudicial to foreign trade in Persia that Great Britain could not consent to its application to British goods. She, therefore, in concert with the Persian Government, established a new tarif [sic] which rectified the situation from the British point of view. Now, however, the Persian Government, in conformity with the principles of Mr. Wilson, desiring the open door and the equality of treatment for all Nations in Persia, is anxious to revise its Customs tarif [sic] and to conclude treaties of commerce with foreign countries based on Persia's economic freedom." There is absolutely no mention of the British financial strangulation of Iran, including failure to pay the country's oil revenues, nor of the British prevention of Iranian trade with Mesopotamia and the United States above documented.

White comments on the tariff regime and points out the misrepresentation contained in the statement: "The Russian commercial treaty of 1901, although made primarily to assist Russian trade, is generally considered, I believe, to have been framed with the idea of prejudicing British trade as much as possible by putting higher duties on goods imported principally from Great Britain and her possessions and, in so far as Persia's revenue was thereby increased, it helped Persia. The former very low customs tariff was based solely on the Russian treaty of Turkomanchai and accrued to other nations by the most favored nation clause. When therefore Russia modified this treaty it had the effect of modifying the tariff levied on all foreign goods and Great Britain was obliged to negotiate the commercial treaty of February 9, 1903, to prevent the tariff on British goods being again raised, by a treaty modification by third parties without her knowledge, and of assuring her merchants of at least as favorable treatment as that accorded

by the Russian treaty of 1901. Great Britain's interest in the treaty of 1901 was not that it was prejudicial to Persia but that it adversely affected British trade interests."

Another major economic grievance is said to be the 1910 Anglo-Russian "note" that prohibited Iran from granting concessions to other powers (Germany, the United States and France) without the approval of Great Britain and Russia. With the disappearance of Russia, this note, similar to the 1907 convention, was moot. Nevertheless, the 1919 document states: "In 1910 the Governments of Russia and Great Britain imposed, as a condition essential to Persia's acquisition of loans from foreign countries, that no concessions which they might consider as contrary to their political and strategic interests shall be granted by Persia to any other Powers or their subjects. As this stipulation was obviously incompatible with the political and economic independence of Persia, it was rejected by the Persian Government. Nevertheless the two Powers would not withdraw their pretensions to this effect." The Russians are blamed for the underdevelopment of Iran: "We have already pointed out the effort continually put forth by Russia to check the economic development of Persia and to control all of her resources. With his object in view, Russia opposed the construction of railways in that country. This opposition has been the more effective in view of the fact that Persia by herself could not create a railway system without the cooperation of the foreigners in the matters of capital, material and technical aid. In this direction, Russia went as far as to obtain from the Persian Government, concessions which she has never utilized. The British Government on its part, could not remain indifferent on this point, and acted in the south of Persia in the same fashion as its rival in the north. The result is that Persia has remained, to this day, without railways and is deprived of the most essential means for her economic development." On the matter of Iran's complaints against Russia, White observes: "Persia has undoubtedly suffered enormous handicaps by the dog-in-the-manger policy of Russia, especially, in getting concessions for the sole object of preventing others from obtaining and exploiting them and to keep Persia in a perpetual state of economic vassalage."

But then the good work is nullified by the inclusion of some deliberate falsehoods regarding the Russian concessions. On July 27, 1918, the government of Sasam-os-Saltaneh Bakhtiari had issued a decree that had annulled all concessions granted to Russia and Russian subjects.[12] While

discussing the cancellation decree, the 1919 Versailles document had embarked on some deliberate falsehoods and misrepresentation—among them was the claim that the decree was issued at the instigation of the Kerensky government in Russia. Pointing out the falsehood, White adds: "The statement made in the second paragraph of page two of the claims that, after the fall of the old Russian regime, 'the Persian Government taking note of the declarations and assurances on the part of the liberal regime which immediately succeeded Tsarism' denounced the treaties, conventions and concessions which had bound Persia to autocratic Russia, is certainly misleading. It would give one to suppose that the abrogation of all Russian treaties and the cancellation of all concessions given to Russians was done by Persia in agreement with the Kerensky Government, which was recognized by the United States and most European Governments. Such was not the case. These treaties and concessions were abrogated by the Persian Government in July 1918, after the Bolsheviki had been in power more than eight months, and maintained a so-called Minister, Mr. Bravine, in Teheran with whom the Persian Government was carrying on negotiations, and who was probably largely responsible for their taking this step. While negotiating with Bravine, the Persian Government still recognized the Russian Legation, as appointed by the old regime, as the official representatives of Russia and, although the Persian Chargé d'Affaires in Petrograd was in relations with the Bolshevist Government, the Bolshevik regime was never recognized by Persia." It is not difficult to understand why the Versailles document had mixed misleading and untrue statements with the just demands of Iran: to discredit Iranian claims and demands for compensation for war destruction and famine. It was part of an elaborate cover-up of the great famine.

The 1907 Anglo-Russian convention and the 1910 note, it is claimed, had deprived Iran of capital and know-how: "Persia being forced to submit to the terms of the Convention of 1907, and to the Note of 1910, has been deprived of the means of attracting foreign capital and initiative for the development of her economic resources. Moreover, for some years, foreign Governments or subjects have wrested, from the Persian Government industrial, commercial and agricultural concessions with conditions entirely incompatible with the economic interests of Persia, and even often contrary to the fundamental laws of the country… The Persian Government being in need of foreign capital and instrumentalities for the development of her economic resources, is, as a matter of fact, desirous to profit, as much as possible, by the financial and technical cooperation of foreigners; but the

majority of the concessions thus far acquired by foreigners involve political aims and have therefore failed to aid in the economic progress of Persia. To enable the country to develop its economic resources, it is absolutely necessary that all existing concessions shall be revised to the end that the clauses prejudicial to the economic interests of Persia be eliminated." Most revealing, in the litany of Iran's "economic grievances" there is no mention of the oil concession to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, nor of Britain's failure to pay Iran's oil revenues during the previous five years—$40 million, a sum many times the annual budget of the Iranian government.

## ALLEGED CAUSES OF THE FAMINE

For our purposes, the most interesting aspect of the Versailles document is its discussion of the famine and its causes. It begins with a brief reference to Iran's losses and "her decimated population": "Persia, although a neutral country, suffered by the war greater losses than those sustained by certain belligerent countries. Her special position as a country invaded by foreign armies, her devastated provinces, her decimated population, in equity and analogy give her the right to reparations and indemnifications due to belligerent countries." The matter of Iran's "decimated population" is not mentioned again. It adds: "In fact, her neutrality has been violated first by Russia, and then by other neighbouring countries… To explain better the position of Persia, it would be necessary to give a brief historical sketch of the facts, in order to prove how certain foreign Powers have deviated from the path of Justice and Equity in their relations with Persia, and how they have sacrificed that country's interests to their own aims." It then devotes two paragraphs to the violation of Iranian neutrality by Russia and Turkey, completely ignoring the fact that Great Britain was an early violator of Iran's neutrality when on November 6, 1914, as described in chapter two, British forces occupied Abadan and its oil refinery and occupied Ahwaz and the Iranian oil fields soon after.

The fighting between the Russians and the Turks had brought ruin to the western provinces of Iran. The Versailles document elaborates: "Thus the provinces of Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and Azerbaidjan, which constitute the richest and the most fertile regions of Persia, became fields of battle between the Russians and the Turks who pillaged, burned, massacred and committed rapine and rape in those parts. Cities and villages were bombarded, forests were destroyed to facilitate military operations and to

furnish firewood, thousands of women and children driven from their homes sought shelter in the fields and mountains where they died of cold and hunger. One of the richest cities of Azerbaidjan, Oroumiah, was pillaged and burned on several occasions. Each time that the troops of one of the belligerents would take possession of some locality, the officers of the victorious force would reduce to extreme misery the inhabitants who had been fortunate enough to escape the exactions and cruelty of the retreating forces." The destruction had spread to other regions of Iran: "The population suffered from the soldiers tyranny, not only in the regions of actual battles, but also in places where troops were stationed who had no enemies to oppose, such as the provinces of Khorassan and Ispahan, where the Russian soldiers maltreated the inhabitants. At Ispahan, the Russian authorities confiscated the belongings of notables in the interest of the Imperial Russian crownlands; in the province of Khorassan the Russian Cossacks destroyed dwellings with their cannon and compelled the inhabitants everywhere to accept their much depreciated paper-money for its face value." Even during their evacuation of Iran, the Russians had brought destruction: "After the change of regime in Russia, when it was decided to evacuate Persia, the brutality of the Russian troops who had lost all discipline increased in violence. Cities, towns, villages, farms, in fact, everything found on their way, was pillaged, and nothing was spared. Hamadan and Kazvin were sacked, and the Russian officers confessed themselves incapable of controlling their men." On Christian militias in Azerbaijan, it adds: "Not content with being themselves the authors of so much wrong to Persia, the Russians assisted in causing them other misfortunes. They distributed arms to the Djelou tribes who had sought refuge in Persia in order to escape the tyranny of the Turks. These tribes, armed by the Russians were encouraged to combat the Turks; and once started they abandoned themselves to the worst excesses. Before leaving Persian territory, instead of disarming the Djelous, the Russians gave them still more arms, leaving them thirty cannons and a number of officers as instructors. Thus the Djelous could continue their depredations at Oroumieh, Salmas and elsewhere, and massacred inhabitants by thousands, including religious leaders." Once again the Versailles document resorts to distortion: "These proceedings immediately furnished a pretext to the Turks to return, for a last time, to Azerbaidjan and subject that unfortunate country to new aggressions." As described in chapter two, the Turkish invasions of western Iran both in 1916 and in 1918 were in response to the Russian invasion of western Iran (in

1916) and the British invasion of northern Iraq and western Iran (in 1918), as well as the hostile posture of the Christian militias and the so-called Djelou tribes.

In addition to the devastation of Iran, the document gives the following "principal reason for the great famine": "One of the principal reasons for the great famine that raged last year in Persia, and which cost the lives of thousands of the poor, was precisely the presence of foreign troops and the atrocities which they committed. The everyday food of the majority of Persians is bread. In the provinces where there were sanguinary conflicts, farmers either perished, or were prevented from sowing and cultivating the land. Their oxen and their seeds were seized either for export or for feeding the foreign troops on the spot." Absolutely no direct mention of British food purchases and British food exports from Khorasan and Gilan. Amazingly while the British are not mentioned, the Germans are blamed for the famine: "Even though Germany was not a neighbour of Persia, she had a large share of responsibility for the misery suffered by that country. She encouraged Turkish encroachments, and her agents intrigued everywhere, sowed the seeds of corruption and fomented political troubles."

Then comes the demand for compensation. Once again, the British are conspicuously absent: "To resume: the losses suffered by Persia during the war are subdivided into three categories: Losses from the acts of Russia. Losses from the acts of Turkey. Responsibilities of Germany." In the list of the "losses" suffered by Persia as the result of the actions of Russia and Turkey is contained the following: "The death of many thousands of Persians who perished during the battles fought in Persia by foreign armies." Another reason for compensation from Russia and Turkey: "The requisitioning of foodstuffs; the seizure and destruction of great quantities of cereals and cattle, serving, respectively, as food to the population and for agricultural work, have caused the ruin of the peasants and hindered the tilling of the fields." Having stated the above, the claim then becomes preposterous: "Many millions of tons of Persian rice were confiscated at Bakou by the Russian authorities before the Revolution, without its price having as yet being paid." Given that the entire annual rice crop of Gilan was at most 200-300,000 tons, the reference to "millions of tons of Persian rice" was patently absurd. The above claims had elicited the following comment by White: "Persia's losses during the war, directly attributable to it, have been severe and the actions of Russia in wantonly destroying everything on the path of her armies from Kasr-i-Shirin to Kazvin, the

results of which I have personally seen and can vouch for, are certainly sufficient for Persia to make out a very strong case for reparation without making misleading and disingenuous statements such as occur in the present claim." He adds: "As already stated above Persia did not act in an altogether loyal manner in regard to her promise to use force to defend her neutrality against the Turks provided Russia would withdraw her troops from Azerbaijan. As to what the reparation should be for the actual damages caused only a commission of inquiry would appear competent to decide…"

The next claim in the Versailles document is particularly appalling: "Expenditure of millions of tomans by the Persian Government to mitigate the effect of the famine caused largely by military operations." Deprived of all financial resources, the Iranian government was in no position to spend any money on famine relief, a fact that had drawn some caustic comments from White. In addition, by claiming to have spent such large sums on famine relief, it was implicitly claimed that millions of lives had been saved. Whatever became of the "decimated population of Persia"? Clearly, the cover-up had already begun. The government of Vossough-ed-Dowleh had faithfully served the power that made and maintained it—the British. White comments "[S]ome of the Persian claims being obviously inadmissible. For example the fourth item of the damages said to have been caused to the Persian state by Russia, namely, the expenditure of 'millions of tomans' by the Persian Government to mitigate the effects of the famine caused largely by military operations, is fantastic. Rich Persians from cabinet members, and even higher, down aggravated the famine last year by hoarding their grain and refusing to sell it to the starving population in order to force the price, which was then exorbitant, even higher in order to enrich themselves even though it should cause the death of thousands of their fellow citizens. The first step taken in this matter was the appointment of a Belgian food controller in the autumn of 1918 and even then members of the cabinet and others of high rank did everything possible to prevent his carrying out the measures necessary to prevent a recurrence of famine conditions. This spring the government appropriated a few thousand tomans for relief work in Azerbaijan and collected a few thousand more from Persian officials for the same purpose but, as far as is known, that is all that the Government has done in this connection and to talk of the expenditure of millions of tomans by the Persian Government is to say the least misleading."

White concludes with the following: "Persia has, as already stated, unquestionably suffered during the war and also before the war and now

would seem to be her unique chance of setting her house in order and receiving amends for the great harm already done to her and many of the claims put forward by her in the enclosed pamphlet are certainly fully justified and all her well wishers cannot but hope that she will receive full satisfaction for her legitimate demands but, at the same time, one cannot help regretting that these legitimate claims should be combined with so many other immoderate ones as to almost of necessity prejudice her chance of having justice done to her true needs and rights."[13]

## NOTES

1. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.
2. White, Quarterly Report No. 2, 891.00/1088, January 10, 1919.
3. White, Quarterly Report No. 3, 891.00/1096, April 4, 1919.
4. Southard, dispatch 2, 891.00/1015, September 2, 1918.
5. White, Quarterly Report No. 3, 891.00/1096, April 4, 1919.
6. White, Quarterly Report No. 3, 891.00/1096, April 4, 1919.
7. White, telegram 84, 763.72119/3396, January 9, 1919.
8. Davis, telegram 3039, 741.91/4, September 13, 1919.
9. Lansing to Davis, instruction 5844, 741.91/23, August 20, 1919.
10. White, dispatch 517 and enclosure, 763.72119/6653, July 16, 1919.
11. Majd, *Persia in World War I*, chapter 13.
12. Majd, *Persia in World War I*, chapter 6.
13. White, dispatch 517 and enclosure, 763.72119/6653, July 16, 1919.

# Appendix

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph T. Yates DATE 1-23-58

NOV 1916

Teheran, Persia.

No. 236. October 9, 1916.

NOV 1916 FOR STATE

INDEX BUREAU 891.504/4

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the food supply is becoming a serious question here in Teheran; on account of the shortage of supplies of all kinds, especially of wheat, barley, rice, hay and straw, prices have become abnormally high and the poor people are suffering intensely. Long lines of the populace wait for hours outside of the baker shops for an opportunity to purchase very inferior bread at extremely high prices. The bakers are using barley and various substitutes instead of wheat to make this bread.

The

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph Evans DATE 1-27-70



The price of sugar went up as high as one dollar and thirty five cents per pound. All kinds of forage are scarce and the supplies procurable are often of an inferior quality. The same condition exists as to prices and supplies of coal, charcoal and naphtha, and gasoline is not procurable.

The state of the drug business is even more deplorable, as it is impossible to find, in Teheran, many articles employed in that trade.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. Gibson Caldwell

Chargé d' Affaires.

000.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-56 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY [illegible] DATE [illegible]

NOV 22 1916

Teheran, Persia.

October 17, 1916.

No. 246.

Office of Foreign Trade Advisor
JAN 22 1917
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

891.5017/5
FILED
NOV 28 1916

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the question of the supply of bread in Teheran has become very serious, as the quantity of wheat in the capital at present is entirely insufficient to meet the needs of the inhabitants. As the populace live almost exclusively on native bread and cheese, for them the matter is a vital one.

Yesterday there were riots in the city, the chief participants being women, and a mob attacked the building occupied by the Ministry of Interior.

In ordinary years the Government receives a large percentage of its taxes in wheat, but this year very

few

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. R. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY [illegible] DATE [illegible]



few taxes of any kind have been collected; also, the main regions from which supplies of grain come, the districts of Hamadan, Sultanabad and Kermanshah, are now occupied by the Turks and therefore it is impossible to receive any wheat or barley from that part of the kingdom.

The Russian and Turkish armies have also required a considerable quantity of provisions and have therefore been an additional cause of the depletion of the grain market.

In addition to these causes, the wheat in the immediate vicinity of Teheran was considerably damaged by locusts and the yield has been very small.

The result of all this has been little bread and exorbitant prices. The Government has promised to take some measures to relieve the situation and if they do not succeed the situation here will soon be distressing.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. G. Morgan Coffery

Chargé d' Affaires.

861.3

ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Hines DATE 1-23-70

3 Yuma

DEC 1917 DEPT. OF STATE

Department of State
DEC 27 1917
DIVISION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Teheran, December 14, 1917.

No. 330.

To Chas. V. Vickrey 1/4/18

File P.

Subject: Poverty and Suffering in Persia.

INDEX BUREAU
891.48/21

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

FILED
JAN 10 1918

Sir:

I have the honor to report that there is such a food shortage, especially of wheat and bread products throughout all parts of Persia, but especially in the northern parts and around and in Teheran, that there is already much privation and suffering ere winter has set in. It cannot be doubted that deaths by starvation will multiply this winter.

Persia is a land of extremes; the rich are very rich and very idle, while the poor are not such as are termed poor in America, but are those who continually hunger and frequently starve to death. Even at this time of year food products are the highest in price known for genera-

tions

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY [illegible] DATE 1-23-70



tions, and the scarcity of grains, fruits and cereals is truly alarming.

The great bulk of the population, being of the peasant class, subsist on bread alone, which is treble its normal price, and very scarce and the supply wholly insufficient. At the public bakeries great crowds gather waiting each his turn or chance to buy, and are frequently sent away disappointed and hungry. Police officers are stationed at these public bakeries to preserve order and hold back the insistent and hungry hordes and crowds, with the result that frequent rioting happens and some blood-shed has taken place.

In order to alleviate the condition the government has sought to furnish wheat from taxes collected in kind to the bakeries at less than the bakers can buy it outside, but this has not, so far, proved to be of much help. Strong measures have been taken to prevent the usual cornering and hoarding of the food supply, and the entire matter has been placed in the hands of Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh, the Zoroastrian in whose integrity and fairness every one has the utmost confidence, but the situation is yet desperate.

Sugar remains one dollar per pound, though recent importation from India has reduced the price some twenty-five percent. Beggars multiply and hundreds swarm the streets, piteously crying and begging, and at times in their desperation assaulting the besieged. Similar conditions are reported from all parts, provinces and cities of Persia. The presence of large numbers of foreign troops in Persia is said to be responsible in part at least for this state of affairs.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

John T. Caldwell

Minister.

848.

Encl. Duplicate copies.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Huse DATE 1-23-70

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

3 Gmcc

FROM

ESR

GREEN

Teheran.

Dated Jan. 22, 1918.

Rqcd. 23, 12 [illegible]

Department of State
JAN 22 1918
DIVISION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RECEIVED FROM STATE BUREAU

Secretary of State,

Washington.

Paraphrased 90 Red Cross file 1/25/18 WMB.

Twenty-second. [illegible]

891.48/30

Repetition January 14, 5 p. m. Your cipher telegram January 10, 6 p. m. Relief needs urgent for different cities. Report several deaths daily. Limited amount of wheat, rice, food stuffs could be purchased throughout the provinces through the Persian Government which fixes prices. Medical supplies would be most difficult. Importation of food stuffs and supplies impracticable if not impossible. Prices exorbitant, wheat 18 to 20 dollars per bushel. Distribution could be made through local American missionaries and existing committees. Persian citizens and authorities cooperating but task too great for them alone. One local organization spends $20,000 monthly in Teheran but cares for only ten per cent of city's needy. Conditions are similar in all the provinces.

CALDWELL.

C. S. B.

891.48/33
INDEXED
SERIALIZED
FILED
JUN 21 1918

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph T. Yates DATE 6-23-70

Cable message from the American Minister at Teheran,

No. dated January 22, 1918.

(Paraphrase)

Reference is made to the cipher telegram of the Department of State, January 10, 6 p.m., and this telegram is a repetition of my January 14, 5 p.m. For different cities [illegible] urgent relief needs. Several deaths daily reported. The Persian Government which fixes prices could purchase throughout the provinces a limited amount of wheat, rice and foodstuffs. It would be most difficult to obtain medical supplies. It is impracticable, if not impossible to import foodstuffs and supplies. Price of wheat is fifteen to twenty dollars per bushel, prices exhorbitant. Local American missionaries and existing committee could make the distribution. The authorities of Persia and Persian citizens are lending their aid but to them alone the task is too great. Twenty thousand dollars is spent monthly in Teheran by one local organization but only ten per cent of the city's poor are cared for. In all the provinces there are similar conditions.

891.48/33

JT/MR
JT/MR

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Hunt DATE 1-23-70

NE Gu

# AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF

JAMES L. BARTON, Chairman SAMUEL T. DUTTON, Treasurer CHARLES V. VICKREY, Secretary CLEVELAND H. DODGE, Treasurer
ONE MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK
(CONNECTED TO FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK)
CABLE ADDRESS: [illegible] TELEPHONE, GRAMERCY 1084
DEPOSITORY: NATIONAL CITY BANK, NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 7 1918
Department of State
FEB 21 1918
Division of [illegible]

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CLEVELAND H. DODGE
HENRY MORGENTHAU
WILLIAM B. MILLAR
GEORGE T. SCOTT
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TALCOTT WILLIAMS
STEPHEN S. WISE

CHAIRMEN OF LOCAL COMMITTEES ARE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

February 19,1918

Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I enclose herewith copy of a cablegram which recently came to us direct from Teheran, concerning destitution in Persia.

We deeply appreciate similar messages which the Department is from time to time sending to us concerning conditions in these lands, and assume that you may desire to have the enclosed copy in your files for information and reference.

Sincerely yours,

C. V. Vickrey

CVV-HN

INDEXED
861.48/26
AUG 16 1918

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Huse DATE 6-23-70

1.

C O P Y

C A B L E G R A M

Teheran, Persia

Received Feb. 14,1918

Forty thousand destitute Teheran alone. People eating dead animals. Women abandoning their infants. Esselstyn feeding twelve hundred daily Meshed. Hamadan Kermanshah busy with relief work. Only limitation lack of money. Need hundred thousand additional for March. Douglas has typhoid.

(signed) Jordan

Note: A later telegram to the Presbyterian Board reports that Mr. Douglas (treasurer of the Central Persia College and of our relief fund) has died.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Lewis DATE 1-23-70

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

WE
NE

RR FROM SPECIAL BLUE.

Department of State
Teheran.
MAR 22 1918
Dated March 16, 1918
Division of
Near East.

MAR 20 1918
DEPT OF STATE

MAR 20 1918
DIVISION OF
NEAR EAST AFFAIRS

INDEX BUREAU
891.48/37

Secretary of State

Washington.

March 16, 2 p.m.

Notify Vickrey located New York: "Accept our thanks for very generous remittances. Appalling distress continues, hundreds dying. Feeding about twenty thousand, Teheran, but relief work extended Meshed, Hamadan, Kazvin, Kermanshah and Sultanabad.

Will probably desire additional funds later but will advise when needed. Signed by Schuler, Secretary.

CALDWELL.

FILED
MAR 22 1918

SAS

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-53 FROM W. R.
BY [illegible] DATE

March 22, 1918.

Mr. Charles V. Vickrey, Secretary,
American Committee for Armenian
and Syrian Relief,
1 Madison Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Sir:

The Department has received the following message for you through the American Minister at Teheran:

"Accept our thanks for very generous remittances. Appalling distress continues, hundreds dying. Feeding about twenty thousand, Teheran, but relief work extends Meshed, Hamadan, Kasvin, Kermanshah and Sultanabad.

"Will probably desire additional funds later but will advise when needed. Signed by Schuler, Secretary."

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

For the Secretary of State:

A true copy of the signed original.

ALVEY A. ADEE

Second Assistant Secretary.

891.48/27
NE AHP/MMB

ALVEY A. ADEE

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. B. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Jones DATE 1-23-58

TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

Paraphrased to FROM
PER Vickery, May 8, 1918
File

SPECIAL BLUE.

INDEX BUREAU
M. I. N. 1240
MAY 7- 1918
DEPT OF STATE

Teheran,
Dated May 4, 1918.
Rec'd. 6, 11:35 p. m.

Stenographic Section
RECEIVED
MAY 8 1918
Department of State

INDEX BUREAU
891.48/1

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 7 1918
DIVISION OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Secretary of State,
Washington.

May 4, 7 p. m.

Notify Vickery (?) New York. "Accept our thanks for seventy-five thousand. Famine conditions unexpectedly increasing and are accompanied by a great epidemic typhoid, typhus. Same conditions other Persian cities. Food stuffs almost unobtainable; prices enormous; people eating grass, dogs, dead animals, even human beings. If possible send additional hundred thousand. Could use more. Signed Jordan." Jordan.

CALDWELL.

FILED
MAY 8 1918

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-52 FROM W.R.
BY [illegible] DATE [illegible]

RD. Collect 75 Cf

PREPARING OFFICE WILL INDICATE WHETHER
Collect
Charge Department
or
Charge to
$

# TELEGRAM SENT.

## Department of State

Washington,

May 8, 1918.

Acted.
ALVEY A. ADEE

Charles V. Vickrey,
1 Madison Avenue,
New York City.

Following received from Teheran: quote, The sum of seventy-five thousand is accepted with thanks. There is a great epidemic of typhoid and typhus, and famine conditions are unexpectedly growing worse. Other Persian cities are similarly affected. The prices of food stuffs are enormous and they are almost unobtainable. Dogs, dead animals, grass, and even human beings are being eaten. An additional one hundred thousand should be sent if possible. More could be used. Jordan. Unquote.

891.48/44

Robert Lansing
Secretary of State.

891.48/44

WE Di-S/MIN

Enciphered by 29 Comm Bear
Sent by operator ..... M., ..... 19..

Index No.—No. 60.

12 & 8 Rm

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. E. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Hines DATE 1-23-70

NE

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

R.A.R.

SPECIAL BLUE.

FROM

Teheran,

Dated May 25, 1918,

Rec'd May 27, 8:55 p.m.

To E. V. Vickrey on Exam. 5/28/18 Tel MMD

INDEX BUREAU
ENCD

Department of State
MAY 28 1918
DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

INDEX BUREAU

Secretary of State,

Washington.

MAY 28 1918
DEPT OF STATE

May 25, 11 p. m.

For Vickrey lodging, New York: "Famine much worse. Present expenditures two hundred thousand a month, but only partially meeting the existing distress. Send if possible two hundred fifty thousand. Signed Jordan.

R.T.A.
R.A.R.

CALDWELL.

FILED
MAY 28 1918

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-53 FROM M. E.
BY [illegible] DATE

May 28, 1918.

Mr. C. V. Vickrey, Secretary,
American Committee for
Armenian and Syrian Relief,
One Madison Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Sir:

The Department is in receipt of the following telegram, dated May 25, 1918, from the American Minister at Teheran:

"Famine much worse. Present expenditures two hundred thousand a month, but only partially meeting the existing distress. Send if possible two hundred fifty thousand. Signed Jordan."

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

For the Secretary of State:

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Assistant Secretary.

891.48/51
NE AHP/MHB

ALVEY A. ADEE

A true copy of the signed original

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT

NE

891.45

Teheran, Persia.

No. 414.

July 7, 1918.

Department of State
DEC 10 1918
Division of Near Eastern Affairs

Subject: Conditions in North-eastern Persia.

INDEX BUREAU
891.48/116
FILED
DEC 10 1918

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith clipping from the Near East of April 12, 1918, which has just been received. Though somewhat belated this article fairly describes conditions as they existed last fall and even at the present time in Persia, and it is hoped the article may prove of interest. Similar and even worse conditions and higher prices have existed and still prevail in Teheran, Hamadan, Shiraz, Tabriz and other Persian cities.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

John L. Caldwell

Minister.

848.

Encl. Clipping from the Near East.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-57 FROM M. E.
BY [illegible] DATE [illegible]

# CONDITIONS IN NORTH-EASTERN PERSIA.

(From Our Correspondent.)

MESHED, November 28.

**Drought and Poverty.**

For more than a year and a-half the Meshed district has had no rain or snow, and the drought is becoming very severe. The price of wheat has risen from a normal of about twelve tomans per kharvar (650 lb.) to forty-five or fifty tomans. The poor people who receive about the same wages as they did before are paying about four times a normal price for bread. For them, extras such as tea, sugar, fruit, etc., are entirely out of the question as being beyond the capacity of their purse. Thousands of them have not tasted meat for many months. All their money goes for bread, and a great many of them cannot get enough even of that. I am told on good authority that babies are being left in the streets to be picked up by any one who will take them and care for them, and that about twenty-five such foundlings have been taken to the hospital of the shrine of Imam Riza. The case is quoted of a man who became desperate from the lack of food for himself and family, but one day brought home ingredients for an "osh," which is a sort of stew very common in this country, and secretly put poison into it. The whole family ate heartily, and all died. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but, whether true or false, it is a fair illustration of the straits to which many of the poor people are being reduced.

The following incident I can vouch for. The carcase of an animal was thrown out into the open just outside one of the city gates. (The people do not always take the trouble to cart dead animals outside of the city. They quite as often leave them in the street or in any other piece of open ground, and the street dogs do the rest.) As soon as this carcase was thrown out, people went running to the spot and began cutting off and carrying away chunks of the meat, while the dogs stood around wagging their tails patiently waiting for their turn to finish up what was left. I can also vouch for the following story having been told to a doctor of my acquaintance. A "hammal" (a man who earns a living by carrying loads on his back) went to the doctor, who discovered that the man had appendicitis and required an operation; he offered to take the man into the hospital, to do this operation free, and to bear all the expense of the case. The man said that he could not have it done, because his family of eight persons was dependent upon the three or four krans a day that he and his son earned. That is pitiful when you remember that the combined earnings of the father and son will buy scarcely six

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. B. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Hines DATE 6-23-70

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

December 24th, 1918.

891.48/127

Dear Mr. Vickrey:

I am sending you herewith the memorandum suggested in our recent conversation. It has necessarily been rather hastily prepared, but I have endeavored to include all that I could think of which might be of possible use to your publicity staff. I have also added some comment of my own on relief conditions. This apparent criticism is intended only in the spirit and in the desire to help your Committee in any possible way. I feel that unprejudiced criticism is sometimes constructive and helpful in other ways, and it is for these reasons that I have made mine. I shall be glad to supply any further information possible.

It would seem to me better not to have my name or official title appear in the event that any of the information supplied is of use to you, unless you very strongly desire it; and in that event the approval of the Consular officials at Washington should be secured.

Sincerely yours,

ADDISON E. SOUTHARD.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY [illegible] DATE 1-23-58

MEMORANDUM.

Going into Persia last June I saw many evidences of the severe famine of the winter of 1917-18. On the first day across the frontier, at Kasr-i-Shirin, our convoy of military motor trucks stopped for the noon rest. I sat upon a truck to have my lunch, which consisted mainly of a tin of baked beans. I opened the tin and skimming off a spoonfull of beans from the top, because they looked unfit to eat, threw them into the thick dust of the sandy road. I had not noticed the ravenous-looking villagers who had gathered around in the meantime; but when I threw the spoonfull of beans into the dust there was a sudden rush as a dozen men and women, so weak that they could scarcely stand alone, threw themselves into the road in a wild scramble to get the bits of food which I had just thrown away. Each grabbed a handfull of the sandy dust which might contain a bean, and crammed it into his or her mouth. These same people crouched around the convoy begging for food, and watching wildly for every crumb that fell into the dust. Each empty food-tin thrown away would be wildly fought for, and the possessor would frantically thrust fingers and tongue into the tin to gather any morsel left. In their eagerness they would often, but with seeming indifference, lacerate their fingers or mouths on the sharp edges where the tin had been opened.

The peasants along the British military route across Persia depended, I am told, for many months upon such food as the soldiers could give them. Owing to transportation difficulties the soldiers had often scarcely sufficient for their own sustenance, but still they managed to spare a little.

I was told of many instances where Kurdish and other native women sold themselves for a tin of "bully beef" (a pound of corned beef), or for a couple of pieces of hard-tack, so great was their hunger.

I personally saw along the Persian roads natives dead and dying from Starvation, some of whom were reported to have had relief-distributed money upon their persons, but which was useless to them because there was no food to buy. I also saw starving people eating animal-dung, and ravenously eating such scant blades of grass as had not yet been withered by the scorching summer sun. Other pitiful sights were moribund people lying along the road, their glassy-looking and unnaturally large eyes being eaten by flies and the terrible sun, and with leaves and grass protruding from their mouths because they were without strength to move or swallow. All of this when within a few hundreds of miles there was food in plenty, but which was not available because of lack of transport.

These were the first of many sights and experiences of this sort which I experienced in a brief trip through Persia; which indicated the terrible starvation existing in a land with plenty of food available in some parts of it, and in some of the neighboring countries; but which was not available because of the lack of transport. One felt ashamed to eat his own food in the face of it, and wondered if these poor people had ever known what it was to have a full stomach of wholesome food. After these experiences I could never refuse a contribution to feed the starving; and I believe no other normal human could refuse. I glory that there are so many big-hearted people in our own United States who are interested in and who, at least partially, realize the needs of these unfortunate victims mainly of a backward economic and political development. The generosity of the American people in relief contributions has established for them a reputation among these poor unfortunates which they should be proud to maintain.

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY Ralph E. Lutz DATE 1-25-60

LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 1150

Teheran, Persia,
June 17, 1925.

JUL 17 1925 DEPT. OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Div. of Near Eastern Affairs

891.5018/—

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to advise the Department that there is CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN TEHERAN OVER THE QUESTION OF ALIMENTATION which has become acute owing to the EARLY DROUGHT which shows no signs of abatement.

FILED
JUL 20 1925

Persia

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED AUTHORITY-LETTER OF 1-8-58 FROM W. H. ANDERSON, STATE DEPARTMENT
BY [illegible] DATE 7-25-78



Persia would appear at least threatened with the situation which arose in 1917-18 when, due to the drought and the destruction of her crops by invading armies, she suffered a famine that carried off, so it is estimated, a third of her population.

Teheran and its environs are dependent entirely for their water supply upon the snows of the Elburz mountains to the north, and although the summer has only just begun, the snows have almost entirely disappeared. Mt. Demavand, which is ordinarily enveloped the year round in eternal white, has already succumbed to the heat and shows large stretches of bare volcanic rock.

The Persian capital with its population of 250,000 is most unfortunately situated in such times of drought. The granary which ordinarily supplies it is Veramin and already, so I am officially informed, that, in normal times, great producing center, is now being provisioned from without.

The greatest wheat producing regions are, of course, Azerbaidjan, Khorassan, Seistan and Luristan. With no practical means of transportation, the grain of these regions is not available for Teheran except at prohibitive prices. The Persian Government is nevertheless already envisaging the necessity of purchasing grain from Zinjan in the district of Khamseh where the crops appear to be less damaged by the drought.

In the capital, the bread has already so decreased in quality that a cry has gone up from the masses of the people. This situation has unfortunately encouraged the Municipality to demand control of the Department of Alimentation which is normally

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